

# Sun Grabbing Johnny



Charles Griffin Plummer











# GUN-GRABBING JOHNNY

By

Charles Griffin Plummer, M.D.

With a Brief Introduction by

GEORGE WHARTON JAMES



Illustrated with Many Bird  
and Nature Photographs

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# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER

INTRODUCTION .....	vii
I. THE MODEL RANCH.....	11
II. GUN-GRABBING JOHNNY'S HOME.....	18
III. TOM WADE'S AWAKENING.....	25
IV. TOM AND HIS FAMILY VISIT THE MODEL RANCH	33
V. THE RETURN VISIT.....	41
VI. HOW TO WELCOME THE BIRDS.....	49
VII. BIRD BOXES AND OTHER THINGS.....	58
VIII. GUN-GRABBING JOHNNY BECOMES INTERESTED.	66
IX. ANOTHER VISIT TO THE "PARADISE" RANCH...	74
X. JOHNNY'S EDUCATION CONTINUES.....	82
XI. WHY THE BIRDS LOVED "PARADISE".....	90
XII. THE WADE FAMILY TALKS IT OVER.....	98
XIII. JOHNNY WANTS TO BUILD A BIRD SHELTER...	105
XIV. JOHNNY HELPS BUILD.....	112
XV. CLARISSA WRITES A LETTER.....	120
XVI. TOM WADE LEARNS MORE ABOUT BIRDS.....	126
XVII. GUN-GRABBING JOHNNY GOES HUNTING.....	132
XVIII. JOHNNY ANNOUNCES HIS CONVERSION.....	139
XIX. WHO EDUCATED THE WATSONS.....	146
XX. A TALK ABOUT BIRDS AT "PARADISE".....	152
XXI. A STORY ABOUT WILD GEESE.....	159
XXII. A SANCTUARY FOR WILD GEESE.....	166
XXIII. HOW THE WATSON CHILDREN WERE TAUGHT..	173
XXIV. TRYING TO FIND THE TEACHER.....	180
XXV. AN EARLY MORNING FAMILY TRAMP.....	186
XXVI. THE NATURE-TEACHER IS FOUND.....	192
XXVII. REAL NATURE-TEACHING.....	199
XXVIII. EATING LUNCH AT RECESS.....	205
XXIX. MORE OUT-DOOR LESSONS.....	212
XXX. HOW TO OBSERVE.....	219
XXXI. THE JOYS OF OBSERVATION.....	225
XXXII. LANGUAGE LESSONS MADE FASCINATING.....	232



XXXIII. THE RESULTS OF REAL EDUCATION.....	239
XXXIV. IMPROVEMENTS ON THE WADE RANCH.....	246
XXXV. GUN-GRABBING JOHNNY IN THE LEAD.....	253
XXXVI. JOHNNY PLANS A PROGRAM.....	260
XXXVII. HE GAINS RECRUITS.....	267
XXXVIII. AT THE REHEARSAL.....	274
XXXIX. GETTING READY FOR THE PERFORMANCE.....	280
XL. AT THE PERFORMANCE.....	287
XLI. JOHNNY'S SUCCESS AS A CAT.....	293
XLII. JIMMY MAKES A SPEECH.....	300
XLIII. MAKING A BIRD'S NEST.....	307
XLIV. JOHNNY'S PLAY "BUGS OR BIRDS".....	313
XLV. JIM AND THE DIRECTOR SPEAK.....	322

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

### Figure

1. A Baby Western Sage-Thrasher, the Best Songster of the Desert.
2. A Utah Woodchuck.
3. A Wild Jackrabbit on Arizona Desert.
4. Young White Egret Herons, Standing on Nest.
5. Nest of White Egret Heron, Build High in the Tules.
6. Nest of Robin.
7. A Pair of Baby Robins.
8. A Gopher Snake.
9. Female Flicker at Nest Opening.
10. Male Bluebird and Bird House.
11. Nest of Canadian Wild Goose, Covered by the Mother when she flies away for food. Built on top of a Muskrat House.
12. Nest of the Above, Uncovered, Showing Six Large Eggs.
13. California Sea-Gulls at Hat Island Rookery, Great Salt Lake, Utah.
14. Nest of Marsh-Hawk, One Egg "Pipped."
15. A Wild Western Willett Being Lifted Off Her Nest.
16. The Sea-Gull Monument, Mormon Temple Grounds, Salt Lake City. Unveiled October 1, 1913.
17. Nest of Long-Billed Curlew. Two more eggs complete the "Clutch."
18. Nest of Black Tern, Floating Lightly Upon the Water.

19. Avocet Nest, Found near New State Gun Club, Utah, April 26, 1919.
20. Nest of Long-Billed Tule-Wren in Bullrushes.
21. Sapsucker, on Tree Trunk.
22. Young Avocet Crouching in a Burned-over Area.
23. Young Bluebirds at Entrance to Bird House.
24. Thimble Berry (*Berberis Fremontii*), Called "Wee-umps" by the Paiuti Indians. It is the autumn food for many birds.
25. Squawberries in Little Cottonwood Canyon, Near Salt Lake City, February 26, 1918.
26. Nest, Unhatched Egg, and Two Young of Pied-Billed Grebes.
27. Nest of Meadow Lark.
28. Young Meadow Lark.
29. Female Square-tailed Humming Bird on Nest.
30. Nests of Cliff Swallows on Roof of Rock Cave.
31. Female Bluebird and Bird House.
32. Nearly Grown White-faced Glossy Ibis, Bred in the Alkali Swamps of Utah.
33. Young Marsh Hawks Showing Fight as They Were Photographed.
34. Nest of the Western Grebe, Afloat on Alkali Water.





## INTRODUCTION

It has occurred to me that it would be an error to fail to give to the readers of "Gun-Grabbing Johnny," a brief—even though necessarily imperfect and incomplete—introduction to its author.

Dr. Charles Griffin Plummer is a well-known and accomplished surgeon and physician who, for thirty years or more has resided in Salt Lake City. He is a singular and interesting compound of John Muir and John Burroughs; of Muir in his intense and passionate love for God's great out-of-doors in all seasons and all places, whether on the mountain heights of the Wasatch range, the sedgy marshes of the Great Salt Lake, or the trackless wastes of the desert; and of Burroughs in his passionate care for detail in everything that demands his attention.

It was my good fortune to get to know Dr. Plummer in the summer of 1920 and our acquaintance rapidly ripened into friendship. It was then that I was privileged to learn fully of his wild sea fowl studies on Hat Island in the Great Salt Lake, to see his moving pictures taken there, and to read his fascinating article on the pelicans in the April, 1920, "Country Life in America." I was also privileged to read the manuscript of "Gun-Grabbing Johnny." It immediately struck me that the lessons inculcated therein in so forceful, simple and unconventional a manner needed to be learned by a vast number of people, and that this book should help to teach them. And when I read the chapters dealing with the woman nature-teacher I longed that every real student of education should read what was so vitally written. For I believe that

here Dr. Plummer has struck the key-note, laid down the fundamental basis of all true education. Here, indeed, learning is an education, a drawing out, and it is done by perfectly natural methods, instead of the artificial methods of books. Give the child the desire, and show him how, to learn through observations of, and reflection upon, the objects which surround him, and the realm of literature then is opened to him in a natural way and he can take advantage of it wisely and profitably.

I regard these chapters as one of the most valuable contributions of the century to the literature of pedagogy and I earnestly commend them to teachers and students everywhere.

Yet it must not be thought that this book is only for teachers. I am satisfied that children of all ages will find great pleasure in reading it, and that the change in the character of Gun-Grabbing Johnny will make an especial appeal to them. Dr. Plummer knows how to interest boys and girls in the things of Nature, and in this book he has set forth the things that they should all learn.

To those who may be inclined to object to the ungrammatical speech of the major portion of the characters of the book let me say there were two very definite reasons for this. One is that it is true to life. Many good people are careless in their everyday speech. It is to be regretted, but it is the fact. Yet it does not follow, necessarily, that they are not good parents and good citizens, nor that they cannot think as wisely and as clearly as some of their better-speaking countrymen. The second reason is that, in the hands of a wise teacher, each chapter may be made into the best kind of a language lesson, by setting the children who are interested in the story to the task of correcting the errors and vulgarisms. This can be done either as an oral or written lesson.

That the story will prove fascinating to children

of all ages and will inculcate much needed lessons,  
I have personally demonstrated, hence it is with  
high confidence I send it forth upon its larger  
mission.

*Georg Wharton James*

Pasadena, Calif.





# GUN-GRABBING JOHNNY

## CHAPTER I

One for the blackbird,  
One for the crow,  
One for the cutworm,  
Two to grow.

Recently I have had some conversation with different individuals regarding the conservation of crops. Most of the persons with whom I have talked live in the country on farms and are vitally interested—or they have every reason to be—in any effort being put forth by individuals, by communities, by the state and by the nation to increase their product, as well as to institute methods to save what already has been produced.

Included in the great variety of opinions submitted in a general way are some so absolutely opposed to the main object of such endeavors as to appear ludicrous in the extreme.

Two farmers live in different parts of the same township, at the most not more than six miles from each other. One of these ranchers is a firm believer in letting everything in all creation have its opportunity to live, bring forth its kind and contribute its

mite to the common welfare. Just how much is the portion given by certain growths, animal, vegetable and mineral, to the fund of progression, this man is unable to calculate.

He cannot say offhand how much this weed, or that insect, or a singing bird, or a predatory animal contributes to his happiness. If he were asked suddenly to say why he had permitted a beautiful tree to remain in the center of one of his fields, either he could not tell me or he would be reticent about giving a reason—for I endeavored to ascertain.

I noticed around this man's ranch home, both in the front and in the back yard, that certain areas had been set aside, "dedicated," as he afterward admitted to me in a clean burst of confidence, "to beautifyin' our surroundin's!"

This acknowledgment had not been volunteered to me until several trips had been made to his home, and not until I had gained a certain degree of intimate association with the ideals as well as with the living essentials that swayed the man and each member of his household.

The elements that entered into "beautifyin' our surroundin's," those which first attracted my notice, were beds of beautiful flowers arranged most tastefully and in perfect harmony with their environment. After I had been given time to digest this most prominent feature in my immediate vicinity, and I had had the opportunity to let my eyes



wander into other regions not far distant, I began to realize that every detail of the stage on which and around which this man and his family actually lived their parts each hour of their lives, had been worked out most satisfactorily and contributed most perfectly to all-around happiness.

Even the home plat had been laid out with the idea of future accessions. Not a building was misplaced; not a shed was where it could not fulfill its mission without intrusion; not a fence obstructed ingress or egress to places where one sought normal passage. Those impedimenta belonging to the household and its daily functioning were where they belonged for the use of these people. They suited the site on which this man and his wife built to the point of perfection.

The kitchen garden occupied a space well in the rear, but not by any means out of sight; it shone with the peculiar brightness of its intrinsic worth just as gorgeously as did the many varieties of flowers they cultivated all about them.

The orchard was situated alongside the road, taking up two or three acres of ground, but far enough away from the roadway not to be too much of a temptation to those traveling that way when the trees were laden with fruits of many kinds. The land beneath the trees was tilled and kept as perfectly vitalized as any portion of the outside fields.

I noted with particular pride that in more than one tree, even amid the limbs of cherry trees, there nestled cozily a carefully placed bird nesting box. Each one of these inviting little homes rang with the harmony of the bird's song, as it peeped from beneath brilliant green foliage, and hospitably offered shelter and protection to its feathered friends.

On the very top of a high pole sat safely a more pretentious bird home that attracted certain species of birds to the place, and this lent an added charm to the surroundings. Peeking out of the doorways of this well-planned building were tiny birdlings which took a look at the outside world, cheeped a few babyish notes, and disappeared within doors.

Rather than to give up his entire crop of cherries to certain species of birds each year, as laughingly he said some of his neighbors had done, this wise farmer had planted black English mulberry trees in certain places throughout his orchard. This was done that the birds might have an offering of sweet, edible berries both before and after his cherry crop ripened. That this was an intelligent procedure, the payment in an undisturbed cherry crop—a big one, too—gave the very best evidence.

Had I had an aeroplane with me, and could I have gone above for a bird's-eye view of this ranch home, I know I would have seen a particularly well laid out checker-

board-like arrangement of fields, with the dividing fences uncluttered by weed pests, and the irrigation ditches would not have been the catch-all for the farm; neither would they have been buried in masses of vegetation of no value to the producer, besides being robbers annually of tons upon tons of moisture needed for other crops.

This rancher's outbuildings were made to furnish shelter, warmth and the greatest possible economy of feeding space to his stock at all seasons of the year. They were contiguous to stack-yards, granaries and other features that contributed easily to the handling of foodstuffs with the least possible expenditure of labor. Cleanliness, in the place of filth and bad odors, made the inspection of this place easy and pleasurable. CONSERVATION, spelled in big capitals, poked up its head from every nook and corner on the farm.

In rows of big nut and fruit trees along far-away line fences lived, quite without quarrels and disturbance, sparrow hawks, robins, orioles, a family of screech owls, sparrows of several species, while the big barn housed a pair of barn owls.

Meadow larks nested in every secluded bit of bunch grass they found adaptable to their needs on the far and near meadows, and blue-birds flew joyously and without interruption in and out of holes made for their use in more than one outbuilding.

Flickers called happily from boxes erected

for their special use in different parts of the orchard, and the English sparrow dwelt by himself among the vines overgrowing an old stable.

Each family of birds had places it liked best in which to live. Each family had the food it liked best to eat and to feed its numerous broods. The hawks fed sumptuously upon the rodent life of the out-of-the-way fields and desert in the daytime, and Mr. and Mrs. Owl took care of the mice and other four-footed creatures about this place and many other farms in the vicinity.

No member of this large family ever had seen the feathers of a song or insectivorous bird about the nests of any one of the several species of predatory birds living on the place. No one ever had seen a hawk or an owl attack a fellow-bird. No chickens ever had been carried away by any one of these birds!

"Yuh can't find many rodent pests on my place nowadays, nor on any o' my neighbors' places nuther, when they let the birds alone!" proudly asserted this intelligent husbandman. "An' some o' the farmers livin' all aroun' this part o' the township air git-tin' ready fer a campaign to save the wild birds. Why, do you know," he continued, "we owe everything we have aroun' here to the wild-life with which we are so well supplied!"

Not a cat was to be found on the place.

"We don't like cats, 'coz they catch the





FIG. 1. Baby Western Sage Thrasher, the Best Songster of the Desert.



FIG. 2. Utah Woodchuck.



FIG. 3. Wild Jackrabbbit on Arizona Desert.

birds," said a ten-year-old girl to me. "Mother says a cat can't catch near so many mice an' rats as the birds does," chimed in another youngster. "An' we jist love to watch the owls after dark sometimes, when they hunt fer mice an' gophers 'round the stacks an' yards!" offered still another young conservationist.

Talk about CONSERVATION with big capitals—this man and his devoted family had learned to spell the word correctly! And when he planted he was glad to give according to his ability to the ones that contributed so much to his largeness of results in his carefully planned program each year, and he made the wild creatures aid him in the easiest and wisest manner—by cultivating their acquaintance.

But his friend who lived just across the township—well, that's quite another story!

## CHAPTER II

He sat on a little pulpit  
That was made of the twig of a tree  
And he preached us the happiest sermon  
That bubbled with sunshine and glee.  
His text was the blue sky burning  
In the glory of all its sweet,  
And his theme was the beauty of heaven  
That lies at our very feet.

—Baltimore Sun.

My other farmer friend lives upon the borders of the other side of the township and dwells in a ramshackle house some distance from the road. So far as I was able to judge, no lawn grass seed ever was scattered on the ground with the hope of beautifying the surroundings in the future.

No flower-beds, with brilliant blooms rearing their heads skyward, showed between the house and the road. A narrow, cowpath-like trail led from an opening in a dilapidated fence, named the gate, to what was called the front door of the house. Alongside this trail no blossoming shrubs were in sight, nor had any ever been planted there.

A scrubby box elder or two, hog-rubbed and cattle-browsed, stared weak-heartedly at passers by, almost urging interference in

their behalf. And between these silent sufferers sagged an old, rusty wire, from which portions of the family wardrobe, just from the washtub, were suspended every day in the week.

Two or three times a week some irrigation water filtered through the sides of a shallow ditch and overflowed this front yard. A bunch of shoats wallowed contentedly in the softened soil and made deep hollows all over the near landscape.

A brindle calf was tethered to a bushy sapling a little to one side of the house, and every time anyone hove in sight down the road, or happened to turn in at the farm-yard gate, the lonely creature bawled as though it longed to tell the story of its troubles at the same time the trees related theirs.

This rancher and his family liked cats, and they had them in all sizes and colors. Every time a house door opened or the so-called screen doors closed with a bang, cats appeared from all sorts of places. An old porch behind the house afforded shelter to these numerous felines, and here they caterwauled all the night long and as much of the day as they found time to indulge.

A tattered sheep dog or two rushed noisily from the shade of struggling currant and gooseberry bushes, a little way off, and bayed fiercely at everyone passing the place.

The remnants of a fast-dying orchard were festooned with the gossamer webs of unnum-



bered tent-caterpillars, and soft splotches of woolly aphids clung tenaciously to every vantage point. Scarred veterans were these fruit trees, yet in the very prime of their lives they were doomed to early destruction. Scores of dead cherry trees were silhouetted against the deep blue of a gorgeous sky, and blighted pear trees in large numbers kept sobbing companionship with them.

Fences were down or were poorly patched; gates hung disconsolately on hinges of half wire and half rope; stables reeked with odors that were uninviting, and barnyards and cowyards were heaped high with the accumulated manure of many years. The outlying fields were burned dry for the want of water or they were barren for lack of vitalizing fertilizers. Crops—if such they could be called—stood scanty and short-stemmed, yearning for something to eat.

All kinds of detrimental weeds and underbrush grew rank along the course of every ditch on the farm. Such fences as one could outline were hidden for rods on each side by the overwhelming excess growth of non-productive vegetation.

Birds? There were none! It had been a long time—some years in fact—since any bird had had the temerity to fly over this place. Had the feathered things been asked why they failed to stop and pay this forlorn spot a visit, going and coming in migration or at nesting time, I am sure their answer would have been that friends of theirs dur-

ing the winter time in the South, when all bird-life has the opportunity to visit familiarly with all feathered families, had told them that this home housed many persons who delighted in shooting at every living thing they saw.

To be sure, millions of insects, savory grubs and beetles, and juicy fat rodents, plied their trade uninterruptedly from season to season, with only an occasional capture of rodents by dogs and cats; but even the air about the ranch taboored every thought of birds stopping for a single meal.

"Mercy!" yelled the mother of the large family of girls and boys on the farm, "there's the first hawk I've seen 'bout this place in many a year. Run, Johnny, get your gun quick!"

The hawk was a wise old bird, and he seemed to hear and to understand the hasty disappearance of Johnny and the glint of steel, for he struck off in another direction and sailed out of harm's way. That ever-ready shotgun stood in plain view of every wild-life creature that happened to get in sight of the old back porch, and it had done deadly damage to many an innocent feathered and hairy thing, until now the very place was anathema to them.

"It's a good thing, ma, yuh yelled when yuh did, er that measley hawk would a' got another chicken," called out a toddling half-clad youngster as he leaned over and

took a big drink out of the irrigating ditch running past the door.

"I ain't a'goin' to have them hawks steal all o' my ducks an' chickens as long as I kin sell a few eggs to buy ammunition to kill 'em with," responded the mother.

The rancher-husband came up just then and asked what ailed all of them—they seemed "all riled up 'bout somethin'!"

"I jist made a grab fer the ole gun," said Johnny, "to take a shot at a ole hawk which was gittin' ready to carry off another chicken."

"That's right, my boy; learn to shoot while ye're young, an' keep a close watch on all these birds that eats up all o' our corn an' wheat an' vegetables an' cherries we have each year, an' some day I'll buy yuh a bran' new shotgun all your own," replied the farmer.

Out in the garden the cutworms worked while this raggedy family slept, and every day saw the hills of cucumbers, tomatoes, corn, cabbage and other worth-while vegetables lessening in number. What the cutworms failed to down in their earliest infancy the cabbage worm, the potato bug and slugs of various kinds finished up. And every day Mr. Rancher wailed at his fate, at the scrubbiness of his land, at the scarcity of water, and because everything he had was being eaten up by the insects.

"I don't git a quarter crop o' nothin' no more," complained this reaper of the sort of

seed he had sown for years. "What's a man to do? He can't git ahead an' save nothin' fer winter, when everything's bein' eat up before it gits a chancet to ripen!" he exclaimed to the chance visitor.

"What has become of all of the birds around this section of the country?" asked the man, in a kindly manner.

"Birds!" he growled. "Why, we kill 'em an' eat 'em—that is, when we kin. Others that ain't good to eat we shoot anyway; fer don't they eat up all o' our grain, I'd like ter know?"

"Serves you right; you ought to be eaten alive yourself, because you have deliberately murdered the very best friends you have on earth," and the casual visitor turned about and walked out of the yard.

"Gee! That feller ain't afeard to tell me where I git off at," admitted the rancher. "'Serves me right,' eh? Well, I'll be durned! I wonder if it is true, as he said. I never thought o' that afore."

"What's the matter, dad? What did that feller say?" called out his wife. "Yuh look all het up."

"I guess I'll drive over an' see Jim Watson on t'other side o' the ridge. He don't have no trouble with cutworms, slugs, Colorado beetles an' them other pesky critters. My land's jist as good as his'n, an' I used ter git good crops, too, but I can't no more. Jim's allus tole me that if I'd stop killin' the birds 'bout here an' save what was my

due in crops, an' give the land a chancet an' not fight natur', there'd be 'nough fer everythin' an' everybody."

The old mare and colt lazily shambled over toward Jim's—the one bright spot in all the valley—and their load was a man being led out into the light of the new day, the day of sensible conservation!



### CHAPTER III

He was dressed in the softest feathers,  
And he sang as well as he spoke;  
And in all seasons and weathers  
His duty was lifting the yoke;  
Yea, lifting the yoke of our troubles  
With the cheer of his comforting word—  
This preacher of faith from the bushes,  
Where God had stationed a bird.

—Baltimore Sun.

On the way over to Jim Watson's model ranch there was but one song that sang itself with renewed vigor and persistency in the heart of rancher Tom Wade—"Serves you right! Serves you right! Serves you right!"

"Maybe that feller told the truth, after all," ruminated this disconsolate tiller of the arid benches upon which much of his land lay. "I'm jist wonderin' what Jim 'll say ter me when I tell him what I come over fer. I'll bet he'll laugh; but I don't keer 'f he does, as long as he kin tell me suthin' ter do ter save my hay, grain, fruits an' vegetables. I'm jist sick o' tryin' ter ranch 'way out here, an' not git erhead enny!" And the disturbed toiler clucked spitefully to the mare and three-year-old that drew the

old buckboard over the sandy ridge cutting through the township at that place.

As soon as the top of the ridge was reached by this slow-going team, the mare hanging back and the colt forging ahead with the vim and strength of youth, but also with youth's unwise waste of force, their owner caught his first recent view of the Watson ranch.

Tom Wade had not been very neighborly with his schoolboy friend during the past years. He called out "Whoa!" to his tired team just before they started down the descent, as he afterward said, "Jist to give 'em a rest fer a minit!" Then he surveyed leisurely that part of the township situated in another arm of the valley.

Sure enough, there was Jim Watson, out in his orchard, cultivating as fast as he could in an effort to keep down weed pests, as well as to pulverize the soil into a deep top mulch that would better conserve all moisture.

As Tom looked more closely at the fruit trees he was amazed to note strange-looking boxes, securely but invitingly placed in advantageous places amid their branches. What startled him more than anything else as he approached the Watson line fence, more than the fruit trees laden with fruits of many varieties, was a well-designed "somethin'" standing among those trees far from the house, as though it was lost—at least, so Tom thought.

“What on earth is Jim Watson thinkin’ ’bout, to hev sich a lookin’ thing as that out in his orchard?” grunted the visiting rancher. “Why, Jim’s gone plumb crazy, I do b’lieve!” and he smothered a hearty guffaw that was on its way to expression as his friend peered at him from beneath the low-hanging branches of a fine cherry tree burdened with beautiful black-red cherries.

“Hello, Tom! What brings you ’long my back line fence? That’s what I’d like ter know. Why, man, you’re good fer sore eyes, so you be!” And he hastily crawled over a splendid, well-set fence, “rabbit-tight and bull-strong.” He grasped the visitor’s hardened hand and gave it a vigorous shake.

Tom took the outstretched hand rather sheepishly, but greeted his friend with keen cordiality. Then he smiled rather uncertainly and said: “T’ tell the truth, Jim, I was jist ’bout ter make a sneak on them air cherries. My, but don’t they look good ’nuff ter eat, though?”

“So they be, Tom. Help yerself, fer we’ve got plenty on ’em. Git in an’ let’s drive ’roun’ the corner over there, put up ther team an’ take dinner with us. I don’t know what Mandy’s got ter eat, but we’ll try ter pick up ’nuff fer one extry, anyhow.” Watson clambered into the buckboard as he talked, and the two friends started slowly toward the fence-corner.

They had gone but a few rods when Tom turned to his friend and said: “Say, Jim,

whatever is that air cement thing a-standin' back there in your orchard?"

"Why, don't yer know? Turn 'round an' let's drive back, an' I'll tell yuh all 'bout it. It ain't quite dinner time, nohow, so Mandy won't be 'spectin' me fer a half-hour yit, an' I'd like ter show yuh what sich a' ornament is fer," answered Watson.

Both climbed over the fence and walked leisurely from one tree to another, admiring one feature here and another there, commenting freely upon the healthfulness of the trees and fruit until they stopped near "that air cement thing!"

Tom uttered an exclamation of wonder as he stood still in full view of the fixture, for there was a pair of robins sitting on the edge of the circular, bowl-like piece, taking a drink. Alongside the robins stood a cock and a hen sparrow. Flapping its beautifully feathered wings in an abandon of delight, as he stood up to his middle in the shallow water, was the bluest of mountain bluebirds.

I wish I could have been present to have photographed Tom's face and attitude when he saw those birds bathing in their cement bath. Jim laughed a peculiar laugh when he told me about the incident afterwards, hanging his head in sympathy for his friend, as he gave vent to one exclamation after another upon the rarity of the sight.

"It would uv done your heart good ter see poor ole Tom. His face lengthened, his mouth fell open, and instead o' the chucklin'

laugh that 'rose ter his lips, tears trickled down his ole cheeks. I never see Tom so all broke up afore. Seemed like he must a had a vision the way he acted, an' I've been won'erin' ever sence whatever come over 'im. All he said was, 'Well, I'll be durned!' an' we-all started back to ther ole buck-board."

Not a word passed between these two men all the way around to the barnyard. Still without talking, they unhitched the team, gave them a refreshing drink out of a staunchly built cement watering trough, and passed on into the barn.

The horses appeared to be quite unused to such palatial quarters, and hung back while they were being led into their stalls. They sniffed at everything as though a barn were a luxury into the mysteries of which they had never been initiated. Almost was it as much of an overwhelming feature to them as it would have been had these two men been ushered unexpectedly into Shelmonico's or Derry's. Tom laughed a sort of last-legs chuckle as he said, "Huh, they don't seem ter act nachull—do they?"

A pair of bluebirds twittered all the time they were unharnessing and feeding the animals, safely and comfortably housed in a nicely made box setting just above the barn door. Barn swallows flew in and out of the hay compartment; and while the men stood looking at the great quantity of first-crop alfalfa already under cover, a mother swal-



low alighted on the edge of her mud basket, close beneath the rafter not far away, and proceeded to regurgitate a small quantity of softened insects into the wide-open beaks of her greedy fledgelings.

Just outside of the barn stood the wagon-shed, and beneath its eaves was a robin sitting contentedly in a homemade nesting platform within arm's reach of anyone passing that way. She had accepted the location because of its appeal to her sense of fitness, and because the very best tree-crotches in the orchard were taken by earlier comers. The brooding female permitted the two men to stand quite near her home, while her mate sat on the roof close by and poured forth the sweetest songs of his repertoire.

On their way toward the kitchen door several other species of birds—the house finch, the fly-catcher, the kingbird, the house wren and others—sang delightedly. Really it seemed as though they did so in honor of this man, hitherto a hunter of all feathered things and furry things, around his own home as well as in the whole community, now, for the first time in his life, being ushered into the sacred precincts of a home giving wild-life of all kinds its opportunity to live and glorying in the results they attained.

Mrs. Watson greeted Wade with old-time heartiness and told him she was glad to have him eat his midday meal at their table. But there was something that had tied Tom Wade's tongue within his mouth so securely

that almost every word he uttered had to be pried out. He appeared to be too full to say a word!

The dinner—a wholesome, well-cooked meal—failed to awaken his usual loquacity. Both Watson and his wife lacked the power to break through his speechlessness. It was not until dinner was nearly over that he seemed to become aroused to the fact that his old friends had been doing all of the talking and that he had sat unresponsive to their attempts at cordiality and homelike hospitality.

He stumbled through his thanks to his hostess for her kindness, said a word or two to the baby girl and boy at the table with them; and then, turning to Jim, said: "Let's go out in the orchard again. I want ter see that air thing them birds was a-bathin' in."

"That's what we call a bird-bath, Tom," responded his host in a kindly manner when they were once more beside the cement structure. "I have others on the place, too, of diffrent patterns, though, all set in carefully selected spots, an' I want ter tell yuh that it pays, Tom, ter give the birds a drink an' a bath. Don't they git 's thirsty 's we do, I'd like ter know?"

"Yuh needn't say another word, Jim, fer I've had 'bout all I kin stan' fer one day, I tell yuh. I guess I don't hev ter tell what I come over fer now, so I'm goin' ter beat it fer home." And, turning on his heel with-

out another word, he started for the barn as fast as he could go.

When he was seated in his buckboard again he put out his hand to say good-bye to his old friend, but not a word was uttered. Jim noticed his embarrassment and said to him, smilingly: "Mandy an' me'll drive over ter spend an hour with you an' Sallie next Sunday afternoon, Tom. So long!"



FIG. 4. Young White Egret Herons, Standing Upon Nest.



FIG. 5. Nest of Small White Egret Heron, Built High in the Tules.



FIG. 6. Nest of Robin.



## CHAPTER IV

The Reverend Dominie Robin,  
Apostle to me and to all,  
Of the golden gospel of beauty,  
The same as taught by St. Paul;  
The gospel of cleanly living,  
Of faith and trust and of cheer,  
Gentle and true and forgiving,  
With nothing to doubt or to fear.

—Baltimore Sun.

Each member of the Watson family was an ardent devotee of life in the open air. Mother, father, girls and boys not only talked such an existence, but they lived it. Their home was spoken of by the people of the community, as well as by strangers, as the only model family institution in the country, perhaps in the state!

No one ever heard another mention the size of the house or rave over its beauty. Each one viewed the place in its entirety. To pick out any one feature of this ranch home and speak of it singly would have been sacrilege. From the roadway, along the east line, back to the farthest fence corner, out and in amid the trees and over the straight-line irrigation ditches, no one ever saw anything that was not in harmony with its envi-

ronment and best fitted for the use to which it was applied.

When neighbors were asked to point out the ranch to strangers, always it was indicated by a kindly wave of the hand toward its location in a sheltered spot in one arm of the valley, usually accompanied by such explanatory phrases as, "That long, low house over there, surrounded by trees, with the big porches on all sides of it—the nicest place in the county!"

Some of the most devoted admirers of the family and its mode of living went so far as to say that the house was more like a huge birdhouse than any structure they ever saw.

Visitors in that community always passed the place slowly. Many stopped at different points of view to note with particular appreciation the setting of salient features, while it was whispered about that some were bold enough to photograph the home site from one point or another and to make memoranda concerning its development.

Of this much I am positive: When Tom Wade found himself inside the house yard he felt nearly as much out of place as his horses seemed to have been when they were tethered to the mangers in Jim's commodious barn. He admitted as much to himself! Never before had he actually visited the home, contenting himself with infrequent visits with Watson either out in the field or in town on Saturdays.

I gained this much from him a long time

after he had made the pilgrimage to "Paradise," as the Watson home had been named by every member of the valley community; for he delighted in telling the story of his midday visit and meal to all listeners. Also, he made much of the fact that he lacked the nerve actually to ask Jim Watson for such information as he sought, because he did not wish to acknowledge defeat to his former schoolboy friend.

Tom said he thought he was sitting in the house, in a big dining room, when he partook of the Watson hospitality that day. But when he sat down and had a chance to look around a little, he found the table was spread on a large, well-shaded south porch, set with comfortable chairs, tables, lounges and rockers, and suitably decorated with many varieties of everyday flowers.

The coolness of the place made a great hit with him, and the lack of insect torment contributed much to his contentment. He noted the carefully screened walls, doors and entrances, and the thick growth of vines everywhere in evidence. He could not refrain from contrasting his surroundings with his own kitchen-dining room within doors—hot, stuffy and poorly lighted—with the open air spaces in which the entire Watson family revelled.

As he drove along home he allowed the team to take its own gait. He told himself that he "jist wanted to think a bit," and the two hours consumed in the homeward jour-

ney gave him the one great opportunity to quiz himself from every angle, away from the influence of other surroundings and fresh from the delightful atmosphere of a real home.

"Today's Friday," he said aloud, with no other hearers than the faithful animals drawing him slowly toward home. "An' Jim said he an' Mandy'd be over next Sunday afternoon. That ain't much time ter git things set to rights 'roun' the old place, but I'll be danged 'f I don't git at it!"

Just as he drove into his house-yard two of the younger boys were seen in hot haste after something that evidently had gotten into strange quarters, for they ran criss-cross among the dying trees in the orchard and out into the garden, making all sorts of fuss about something. And to add to the confusion, one of the dogs was excitedly aiding in the chase. Another hopeful was hot-footing it for the house, yelling at every jump for someone to get the old shotgun for him.

"Whad-yer got, son?" Tom called to his scrambling boys.

"Oh, gee, dad, it's a big blow-snake! An' Johnny's gone after the ole gun."

"Git me a club an' I'll finish him fer yuh," said the farmer. "No use wastin' powder an' shot on that feller!" And, seizing a stick, he crushed the life out of the harmless creature with one awful blow!

The boys stood around admiringly and

told of the snake's entry into the place from across the road. While they were telling their story, interspersed with many violent contradictions from one or the other, a man hailed the group from the roadside. He was on horseback and had been a silent witness of the commotion. Then he said to Tom:

"Hello, Wade! What have you been killing over there in the orchard?"

"Jist an' ole blow-snake—that's all!" answered the rancher.

"Careful, friend! Don't you know that snakes are among the very best friends a farmer has—blow-snakes in particular?" replied the friendly rider.

"What! Well, I've just come from Jim Watson's place, over the ridge, an' I learned som'thin' 'bout what birds kin do—an' now 'long yuh come an' tell me snakes is good fer us farmers! Pretty soon we can't kill nothin' that's pesterin' us. Yuh'll hev ter show me," said Tom Wade.

"As you know," responded the man, who had ridden into the yard by this time, "I'm the county agricultural agent, and it is my business to try to tell you ranchers anything you want to know about agriculture and horticulture. Perhaps I don't know everything, but I'm positive of one thing, and that is, next to birds, harmless snakes are the farmers' best friends.

"Why, man," he continued, "each snake on your place is worth at least five dollars annually." And then he went on to relate the



great numbers of smaller species of rodents these creatures destroy, and of the immense quantities of grasshoppers, beetles and other destructive insects upon which they feed. All of which was news to the farmer and his boys; and the kindly intentioned agent left them where they stood, clucked softly to his horse and rode out of the yard.

"Well, I'll be durned!" seemed to be Tom's favorite expression, and on this occasion it came forth as involuntarily as usual. But there was this difference: just now it had a marked accentuation that was foreign to the ears of his boys. There was a note of conviction in it on this occasion.

"Sally," said the farmer to his wife, "I've jist come from Jim Watson's. It was nigh onto dinner time when I got there, so I set down an' et with 'em. I seen some o' the strangest sights ever, too!" The mother and the girls and boys with them crowded near to hear the story.

"Out in the orchard he's got funny boxes set up in the trees fer the birds," he continued. "Right in the middle o' his cherry orchard is a cement thing he calls a 'bird bath,' a-settin' out there. And I'll be danged 'f I didn't see a ole cock sparrer an' his hen, a pair o' robins an' a bluebird a drinkin' out on it! An' the bluebird was takin' a bath, too! Gee, but I never see sich things afore!"

As he finished speaking Rancher Wade turned around and went off toward the stable talking to himself. The mother and her

children went slowly into the house, but no word was spoken. Evidently Tom Wade's news had a slowing-up effect.

Mrs. Wade met her husband when he returned from his chores at the barn. "How is Jim an' his folks, Tom?" she asked. "I hain't seen them fer years."

"Jim an' Mandy's goin' ter drive over here next Sunday afternoon an' bring the kids," murmured the farmer. "I guess Jim see I was all broke up over them things he has over there, an' that I had come ter talk 'bout 'em, but didn't hev the nerve ter say nothin', so he said they'd be here an' we c'u'd talk 'bout the 'bird bath an' boxes' when they got here."

"A-comin' over here next Sunday," snapped his wife, "an' this's Friday?"

"Yep!"

"What in the world'll I do?" She looked about quite helplessly. Then an inspiration came to her, as she called out: "Here, you childern, turn in an' begin ter help me git things straightened up right away. Tom, you clear out an' go at the place as yuh never jumped afore. We'll try ter make the old ranch look respectable at least!"

"I jist wisht yuh c'u'd a-seen them air birds a-bathin' in that cement thing out in the orchard, Sally," Tom called back quietly to his wife.

"I ain't got no time to do nothin' but work from now on to nex' Sunday noon, Tom Wade—an' that's 'bout all you've got ter

do." And she started after this, that and the other thing with more energy than her husband had seen her exhibit for years.

The bacterium *energeticus* seized hold of the rancher the same time it fastened itself to his wife—and before he knew it he **was** heels over head in the cleaning-up campaign instituted by his wife for the coming Sunday.

## CHAPTER V

A riot in the rosebush,  
A scuffle in the grass;  
The frightened flowers wonder  
If war has come to pass.

A chatter and a clatter,  
A wriggle and a squirm;  
And all the row about a plump  
And juicy little worm.

—Robert Loveman.

When Jim Watson told me about the prospective visit to Tom Wade's ranch the following Sunday afternoon he said: "I jist wisht you could happen ter be over there a little while afore we git to his place, an' be talkin' to Jim when we drive in. Can't yuh git 'roun' that air way when yuh take yer long hike nex' Sunday? It would do me an' Mandy a heap o' good ter hev yuh on han' with a few more argymints than we hev ter give 'em."

"What time do you think you will reach the Wade home, Jim?" I asked.

"Oh, 'long 'bout three o'clock, I guess," he answered. "Wait a minit; I'll jist ast mother what time she thinks we orter go." And he started toward the house.

We were out in the orchard at the time, inspecting the preparations he was making for further entertainment and shelter of his bird friends for the approaching winter. He had built a rough scaffolding in several places, and on some of these contrivances he had thrown a thick, well interlaced covering of shocked corn, each stalk with its one or more ears of corn still hanging in their places. These stalks he had woven back and forth in such a way as to make the north and west exposures quite windproof.

Other types of shelter had closely thatched roofs and walls of tules, sedges and bull-rushes that made them storm-defyers of the highest order. There were some that were more open, but the openings of which were guarded carefully by cuttings that had been saved for just this purpose from the season's pruning operations.

In each one of these winter bird-screens he aimed at utility. There was nothing ornate in the structure of any of them. He said he had placed them among the trees of the orchard because he wanted the birds to recognize that part of the farm plot as their special home. He desired them to be on hand early in the spring to devour the very first insects that showed themselves in the warmth of glowing, sunny days.

Every one had provision within for the feeding of suet, fat meats, grains, seeds of many kinds, as well as a self-warming mechanism to keep water from freezing. Jim



Watson realized to the fullest the necessity of food and water for the birds if he hoped to keep them with him in all seasons.

With infinite care he had thought out every precaution for the protection of his feathered friends from the attacks of wild animals of any kind, and he had installed them inside each rude winter quarters. Small outlets through the roofs, leading to the open air, had been made in each building, and these opened always toward the sunny side! No cat or other prowling creature could reach these openings from without. If a bird happened to be caught inside, feeding or drinking, at once it had perfect egress through the roof to safety and assistance.

I viewed these conservation appliances with mixed feelings. First, I was overwhelmed by the thoughtfulness of the man and his family. Then I marvelled at the man's ingenuity. When I talked with him about these efforts in behalf of the birds, he said all was the combined result of the whole family's concentrations along such lines. He said that Mrs. Watson and he made it a rule to consult every child on the place concerning his views in these matters. Each one was induced to initiate some method or movement that contributed greatly to the endeavors of the family, with the result of increasing immensely the capacities of the various contrivances as well as making them

more adaptable in the cause for which they sought expression.

These creations were of little or no cost, so far as the outlay of money was concerned. The materials, with little exception, were found right on the ranch. Many times they used the rustic design for the framework of these structures, thus making them all the more attractive to the invited guests. Wherever I looked I found some expression of the love this man and his family bore for their little-known visitors; on every hand I saw the manifold richness of the blessings that had come to them from their wise consideration of the value of all wild-life to them.

"Mandy says we'll take the ole 'Can't Afford' an' git there 'bout three o'clock, she guesses. Maybe Tom an' Sallie won't be very glad to see the hul passel on us, but we're goin', anyhow; an' you try an' git there, too." With these words ringing in my ears, I walked off toward the roadgate, and from there passed on over the ridge into a less settled arm of the big valley.

When I casually strolled past Tom Wade's ranch the next Sunday afternoon I saw that either a revelation or a revolution had occurred since my last visit there. Perhaps it was both. At any rate, the revelation had brought forth the revolution, for many changes had been made in the immediate home environment.

I saw the Wade children running out to-

ward the front yard and peering suspiciously up the road over which the Watson family were bound to travel. The father was chewing a stem of newmown hay, rather contentedly I thought, as he appeared to be making a survey of his accomplishments of the past two days. His effort at "riddin' up ther place" had been productive of much good—improvements that I was certain had come to stay.

Wade was leaning against a newly-pruned tree standing well out into the yard, about the only one that had been saved from insect and cattle ravages, and he greeted me with more than his usual warmth. He, too, had both eyes up the road!

"Jim Watson an' his folks'll be here pretty quick," he said to me. "Better stay an' hear what Jim has ter say. Yuh know I tole yuh I'd been over to his place an' seen them bird boxes an' baths he's got among his trees; an' maybe we kin git 'im ter talkin' 'bout 'em."

"Watson is doing a splendid work among the farmers of these valleys. His efforts to teach them how to save wild-life, and the great gain that comes to them from offering homes in summer and rations and shelter in the winter, ought to be productive of much good. I believe thoroughly in his scheme to better his own condition by such labors, and while he is so engaged he is not acting selfishly. The very least he does aids every neighbor within miles of him," I answered.

“They’re comin’, dad!” yelled an excited kiddy who had made a sneak around the far corner of the house, where he could secure the first view of the approaching family party.

I thought I saw a look of disappointment on the father’s face because he had not been the one to announce the coming of their visitors in the old “two-cylinder!”

The old car wheezed into the farmyard behind the house, stopped short close to the porch—and all of the dogs on the ranch let out one big howl; then all was silent!

Johnny had been appointed “keeper of the hounds” for the day. He was told to keep the noisy creatures out of sight and hearing. But the chug-chug entrance of the party was more than the canines could stand. They broke and ran from their improvised pound and gave forth a typical ranch-dog greeting, the most kindly one of which they knew anything! It caused no annoyance, but the boy got a word from his “dad” that made him hustle the scared cross-breeds under cover for the remainder of the day.

The meeting was one of confusion and embarrassment for all concerned. This was the first real visit ever exchanged between the families, at least when all members participated. Soon, however, some of them were in the house, others went out into the yards, while a few ransacked the barns and stack-yards.

The women folk greeted each other no

longer as had been their custom in their girlhood. It was "Mrs. Watson" and "Mrs. Wade," instead of the old-time "Mandy" and "Sally." Yet the ice did not remain long unbroken, and a feeling of goodfellowship reigned securely. One of the boys had discovered a fat gopher that had gotten so far away from his home hole in the excitement of seeing the Ford-full crawl into the yard that he laid aside his customary caution, was waylaid and carried off triumphantly by Johnny as an exhibit of his killing prowess.

Tom and Jim gradually edged off toward that portion of the farm in which they were most interested—the barns and corrals. The girls, shyly holding hands, sought the front yard, that had been cleaned and pruned in a marvellous way, making it presentable to the visitors. Old dollies were brought forth, clothes that had been handed down through numerous dolly generations were fished out of tin-and-wood boxes, and slowly the younger femininity was busy in doll-dom. The Wade boys, eager to display to its best advantage every feature of their ranch, started off in the direction of the outbuildings with the rallying invitation of, "Come on down to the barn an' pastur'—we've got a new colt out there!"

I walked along with the fathers out into the yards and near the edge of the orchard—what there was left of it—allowing them to do the talking. Jim had a grip on the con-



versation that would last for some time, and Tom was a good listener. Jim was well prepared to tell about the ways and means he and his family used in enticing the birds around their homestead, as well as to speak of the various remedies employed generally by wild-life conservationists in their endeavors.

The wives, noticing us engaged in earnest council out underneath the one nice tree around the yards, joined us, and the talk became general.

The topic nearest to Tom Wade's heart would not remain unexpressed very long, however, and he said to his wife: "Sally, ast Jim ter tell us 'bout them cement bird baths an' shelters an' other fixin's he's got over to his house. I swan I don't know how he ever done it, but he's got the things that gits the birds 'roun' 'im, I tell yuh!"

I sat down on the ground and listened to my friend tell about what he had done for the birds in his community.

## CHAPTER VI

You never see a bird alone—  
There are always two;  
Men and women singly moan;  
Birds know how to woo.

The birds are never bachelors  
Or spinsters, all unblest;  
They wisely know the happiness  
Within a sacred nest.

—Robert Loveman.

“I ain’t much uv a talker, an’ I didn’t know me an’ Mandy an’ the kids had done anythin’ out o’ the ordinary until our fr’en’ here,” and Watson gave a kindly meaning wave of his hand in my direction, “come ’roun’ our way one day, when we first come inter the valley years ago, an’ said he liked the looks o’ thin’s ’bout the place. We was jist buildin’ then, an’ had laid thin’s out as we liked ’em, but hadn’t set out no trees yit.”

“But Jim,” interrupted his wife, “on the ole farm, in another part o’ the state, we had a pretty fine place I thought, an’ I tell yuh we learned in them days what it meant to be kind to our bird an’ animal fr’en’s. It was mighty tough gittin’ on in that part o’

the country in our first two er three years o' married life, so we felt called upon to use everything that could help us ter git erlong."

Tom Wade smiled at the way Mrs. Watson took up the cudgel for wild-life conservation, and stole a sly glance in the direction of his wife, who sat across from him staring blankly at the speaker. An expression of unmistakable surprise, not unmixed with admiration, wreathed her face as she looked from Watson to his wife. She appeared to be asking herself what was going to happen just then. Never had she dared to offer her opinion when her husband was doing the talking with friends who came all too infrequently to their home.

"Yuh know, Tom," said Jim Watson, turning to his boyhood friend, "when me an' Mandy married she was the one what learned me the fust little thin's I knowed 'bout the birds. Why, do you know, she had a little ole shelf sot up jist outside the summer kitchen winder, where a pair o' robins made their nest an' hatched out four little babies the very fust year we was out there on the desert. She had the mother an' the father bird (them's Mandy's words, Tom!) eatin' outen her han's afore they had their nest up; an' woe be to ennyone er to ennythin' what come too clost ter her pets. Them birds allus knowed where ter fin' feed an' water, no matter how often they come fer it—fer Mandy had a supply right there!"

“Why, how—how’d yuh do it, Mandy—I mean Mrs. Watson?” stammered Sally Wade.

“Oh, it’s still Mandy,” laughingly replied her old friend, but not looking up. It seemed to me Mandy Watson was trying to shield her hostess as much as possible, because already she had recognized the position she occupied on the ranch, and her heart went out to her with a strange yearning.

“I didn’t know as how Mrs. Watson had done so much uv the plannin’ over to your house, Jim,” Tom Wade said, with a suspicious inquiry. “I thought you’d done all o’ them thin’s an’ set ’em up yerself.”

“So I did do most uv the work, Tom,” emphatically replied Watson, “me an’ my boy Jimmy. But I want ter tell all on yuh right now that not only my wife, but every one o’ them kids had a finger in all them kind uv pies!”

“What does kids know ’bout such thin’s, I’d like ter know,” asserted Wade. If he had not had himself under perfect control at the time I thought I might have detected a note of sarcasm in his voice. Evidently his wife had heard it, for she looked up quickly, almost alarmed at the sudden change in her husband’s manner of address. But neither Jim nor his wife heeded it, so I was relieved.

Mrs. Watson looked up smilingly and again took charge of the conversation. “I owe all I ever learned ’bout birds an’ wild animals to a splendid man-teacher we had in

our district one winter an' spring when I was a young girl. He jist loved ter tramp over the hills an' far out into the desert alone every chanct he had. He boarded at our house, an' every Friday afternoon after school was out he'd chase off inter the mountains er some other far-away place, an' we wouldn't see nothin' uv him 'till late Sunday night. Sometimes he'd walk inter the school-room on Monday mornin' jist 'bout time ter take up school, with all his old clothes on, jist as he come from the hills; an' we children used ter wonder how he darst do it.

"Every day he'd hev somethin' ter say ter us 'bout the beautiful thin's he'd seen outdoors. Afore he'd begun ter speak uv 'em I didn't see 'em. I often looked out o' the winder er stepped to the door jist to be a-lookin' outdoors, I guess; but I allus felt soothed-like, 'specially when thin's wa'n't goin' jist right ter suit mother. It seemed ter me every time he heerd anyone in the house git riled up er bit, he'd suddenly say: 'Oh, see what a grand sunset there is over there behind that cloud!' Er maybe it would be a hot, muggy day an' everybody complainin' 'bout the heat; then he'd say: 'What won'erful weather fer corn! How it does come along these hot nights. Isn't it great how a' All-Wise Power knows when ter make it hot an' when cold is pleasantest?' And we'd all laugh a little at sich



remarks. But I tell yuh it set all on us ter thinkin' 'bout somethin' else besides ourselves."

"An' yuh mean ter tell me," questioned Tom Wade, "that yuh learned all 'bout sich stuff in school when yuh was a kid? The little time I put in goin' ter school they learned us nothin' but readin' an' writin' an' a little bit uv hist'ry. Them teachers in our parts said there wa'n't no use tryin' ter learn 'bout nothin' else."

"I know they didn't tell me an' my brothers an' sisters ennything 'bout sich thin's," commented Jim Watson. "I hadn't had sich a fine teacher as my wife had when she went ter school."

"Yes," broke in Mandy, "an' they only kep' him two terms. The directors said he knowed too much ter teach school. He didn't give nuff time ter the girls an' boys indoors, they said, to suit them. They tole 'im they didn't pay 'im fer runnin' all over the country an' not payin' no attention ter his school work. An' it allus seemed 's though he'd give us a heap more when he'd come in from sich long tramps 'way off somewhere, fer whatever he'd say was awfully interestin' ter all on us. We couldn't find no sich stuff in the books as he'd tell us 'bout!"

"I wisht I could a learned 'bout some o' them thin's when I was a little girl in school," volunteered Sally Wade. She seemed to have added an inch to her stature

as she asserted herself and gave voice to her opinion. "I was allus wild ter know what was goin' on outdoors," she continued. "But all the teachers I ever had didn't know nothin' 'bout Nature, er the flowers, er the birds, er the trees; fer when we'd ast 'em sometimes they'd say, 'Aw, that's jist a bird!' 'But what's it good fer an' what's its name?' we'd say. 'That don't matter! They ain't good fer nothin' but ter eat!'"

"When me an' Mandy fust married," rejoined Watson, "she began ter tell me 'bout the great value o' the birds 'roun' ther new place over in the ole valley where we fust settled. She said that air teacher o' theirs tole 'em they et up the insecs an' the rodents what destroyed the hay an' grain, the fruit an' the trees. I said she'd hev ter show me—an' she did, too! Why, d'yuh know when we took into our heads ter move 'way from our fust ranch—sell an' git out—an' come over into ther valley t'other side o' their ridge yander, Mandy said to oncet, 'Now, let's git ready, fer the birds an' other wild thin's 'll want er place ter come an' stay with us if we give 'em er show.' An' we did!

"When our fr'en' here come erlong jist in the nick o' time, too, we was gittin' ready ter buy trees an' bushes an' vines fer every spot on the farm what 'u'd grow 'em. He tole us all 'bout all the trees an' shrubs that 'u'd grow berries fer the birds in winter time. I ast him fer a list an' he give 'em

ter me, too. An' when we built the great big porch on all sides o' our little house we planted vines that had berries on 'em, fer the birds. An' d'yuh know, Tom, the very fust summer we set 'em out the birds come an' built ther nests in 'em. Ther' wa'n't many places what looked invitin' to the little fellers when we first went on to the new place. But seemed 's though they kinder knowed we'd set them air thin's out fer 'em, 'coz they went right into 'em and begun ter keepin' house in 'em—jist 's though they owned 'em—an' they did, too, I tell yuh!

“An' then, 's soon as they got big 'nuff ter hev berries on 'em—whew, what flocks an' flocks of wild birds called on us every day! Every fall we'd hev the yards an' stacks an' the trees an' the vines jist full on 'em—an' how they'd chatter and sing ter one 'nother! Seemed 's how they wanted ter thank us fer givin' 'em a chance ter stop an' say 'Howdy!' ter us!”

“My husband says birds ain't good fer ennythin' 'cept ter eat,” quietly put in Mrs. Wade.

“We don't look at it like that,” responded Mrs. Watson. “We took the pains to go inter thin's pretty far, an' we found out the more birds we had 'roun' the place the less insecks we had in our garden, among our flowers an' on our trees of all kinds. An' the less insecks we had, the more fruit we had an' the cleaner we could keep the ranch.

That's why, I guess, all the folks over our way call our place 'Paradise'."

Once more Jim Watson took up the thread of the conversation, and said: "It was Mandy's notion, too, ter make ther bird baths an' set 'em up in diffrent places. All on us figured out that it was less expensive to have the birds than it was to buy poisons ter kill off the insecks. An' then sometimes the birds might git poisoned trying ter git rid o' them pesky insecks an' rodents. Then jist see what a lot o' beautiful music they give us every day from early in the mornin' 'till dark!

"When we-all talked 'bout how ter make it comfortable fer them feathered songsters an' keep 'em with us ter cheer us with their presence an' their happy ways in winter, we made up our minds to make shelters fer 'em an' warm drinkin' fixin's, too. Nobody can't tell none o' our fambly it don't pay ter give a mite o' everythin' we raise ter the birds an' our other wild fr'en's. Suppose they do eat a few grains o' wheat an' corn an' other thin's—ain't there plenty fer all?

"Why, seems ter me sometimes, when I git ter talkin' 'bout the little fellers, I don't know when ter stop—they've done so much fer me an' my fambly. An' the best of it is they'll do it fer everyone what gives them a chanct ter do it!"

"But how do yuh make them boxes an' shelters an' baths an' other fixin's? That's what I'd like ter know," declared Sally

Wade. "If there's any way I kin git the birds ter come 'roun' our ole place, I tell yuh I'm goin' ter git at it!"



## CHAPTER VII

Earth's crammed with heaven,  
And every common bush alive with God.  
But only he who sees takes off his shoes.

"I'll tell yuh, Mrs. Wade," answered Jim Watson. "It ain't no trick at all ter fix up comf'table homes fer the birds ter nest in. 'Course yuh got ter know somethin' 'bout what sort uv a place a bird likes ter live in. Now, yuh know a robin wouldn't like ter build her nest in a box what was made fer a woodpecker, an' a medderlark ain't goin' ter set up housekeepin' in a holler tree where a bluebird 'u'd stay.

"Mandy was the one what started me out right in this here biznis, 'coz she knowed what she wanted ter do. Jist's like 's not I'd a thought any ole place 'u'd be good 'nuff fer a bird ter live in, but Mandy, she knowed better. That school teacher she once had give her the names o' certain books that tole all 'bout sich thin's. What he didn't know she found in 'em."

"But the best thing uv all, Sally," urged Mandy, "was the way he tole us youngsters 'bout the habits o' the birds. He had been with 'em so much an' so long that he knowed

right off what they liked ter eat best an' where they went ter git it. An' he tole us when the birds could git all the insecks they wanted ter eat they didn't have ter have much uv any water ter drink, 'coz insecks are made up mostly uv water. He said, though, when birds stayed 'roun' late in the fall an' all winter, an' had ter eat grain an' weed-seeds an' wild berries, they had ter have water every day.

"He never tole us much 'bout what sort o' thin's ter build fer 'em ter drink out of an' ter help keep 'em warm in winter. Yet he knowed all 'bout sich thin's, an' tole us we c'u'd find all kinds o' plans fer buildin' 'em in the books he tole us 'bout. He said 'twas best ter let your common sense teach yuh what ter make out uv yer own pattern."

Watson turned to Wade and said: "Of all the contraptions I ever seen in a book was one that made Mandy an' me an' the kiddies work like sixty ter make. An' then we didn't do it anythin' like 'twas in the book. It was a combined feedin' an' waterin' shelter. Jist think o' that, will yuh!

"The feller what got that air thin' up said it c'u'd be used fer enny season, cold er warm, only in winter time yer had ter put up a set o' blinds all 'roun' the upper story, like, ter keep the wind an' snow outen the place. An' I tell yuh, Tom, it done our hearts good, the fust fall we got it done and set up out there in the orchard not fur from the house, ter see the diff runt birds what

went there to git some fat meat an' some ole cracked corn, nuts an' wheat. Once in a while our little girl 'u'd steal out there with a big fat doughnut an' stick it on a sharp stick we had made fer jist sich stuff. My, how them birds went fer that ole doughnut, though!"

"I tole Jim he must set that feedin' station near nuff ter the house so all uv the fambly c'u'd watch the proceedin's," chimed in Mrs. Watson, "an' he did. That was the fust one we made, an' it stood not more'n fifty foot south o' the dinin' room winder. The children wanted it near so we c'u'd study the habits o' these feathered creatures. An' when it got so cold, an' we thought sure no bird 'u'd stay no longer, we put an ole shaller iron dish up in the shelter, an' then Jim brought out an ole incubator lamp, that wasn't workin', which we c'u'd use ter keep ther water from freezin'.

"Well, I never see the way them air poor little birds drank that water! We had ter fill that ole dish two-three times a day. There wasn't no water fer 'em outside, unless they stole up ter the waterin' trough at the pump, so we had that ready fer 'em jist 's soon as they needed it. Every bird what had er drink there tole some other bird 'bout it, I'm sure—the way they used ter come!"

"Did them little critters bathe in that dish, too, in cold weather," hurriedly asked Tom Wade.

"They didn't exactly bathe all over under in it," replied Mrs. Watson. "'Bout every day, though, we'd see robins, medderlarks, sparrows, woodpeckers—them big 'high-holes,' they call 'em—and the little black an' white spotted woodpeckers, too, standin' on the edge of the dish an' splashin' their-selves up an' down the front an' over their heads an' flap their wings—an' then they'd hop up on a perch above the warm water an' pick their feathers.

"Once in a while a big jay'd come friskin' 'roun' the food-box, jist nosin' 'roun', I guess, 'till he found out what was there—then, say, how he did go after that stuff! Even a ole magpie and some o' her last babies learned that we were their fr'en's an' were glad to hev 'em 'roun' the place, 'coz they made fun for the childern on stormy days an' they helped ter keep the place clean o' lots o' mice an' sich things."

"Tom don't care fer them English spar-rers, nor the jays, nor the 'mags,' as he calls 'em, nor fer any other kind o' bird, I reckon," said Mrs. Wade. "He says they ain't no good, an' lets the boys kill 'em 's fast 's they come nigh. For my part, I hain't had much experience with sich thin's, but I allus thought they were made fer some good an' had a right ter live. But when Tom says 'No!' that settles it 'roun' here."

Apparently paying no attention to the change in the conversation, Jim Watson and his wife exchanged glances and seemed to

be awaiting the opportunity to answer such assertions forcefully, but at the same time in a kindly manner. They realized that in Tom Wade they had a problem of more than ordinary interest. He had carried on such an eminently successful warfare against all of the earth's creatures, for so many years, it was not expected that he would give in to influences that were fighting him and his ways slowly, but with evident benefit to all the community.

The Watsons believed that the best way would be to allow things to go on as they had been going, and in time, they were so certain of their own positions, they would reach Tom Wade. Then, when his conversion to their points of view would be a matter of record, the members of his family would fall into line without further trouble.

"You know, Mrs. Wade," Jim said, "we had the best success in makin' our drinkin' fountains when we made a sort o' framework o' laths fust. Some one o' our kiddies, er p'raps 'twas Mandy, I don't know which, got a kind uv a idee o' what sort o' shaped thing we wanted ter make an' drawed it out on paper. Then all on us talked the thing over every day an' made suggestions fer changes, yuh know, 'till finally, when we thought it had all the idees uv all on us included in its form, we jist put 'er together out of good, strong two-by-fours an' lath an' covered it with wet, quick-settin' cement. Then we stood the thin' up in the shade,



where there was plenty o' warmth from the sunlight, an' wet it a little every day so it wouldn't crack; an' I tell yuh it made a fine lookin' ornimint!"

As Watson finished speaking he looked over at his wife and nodded to her as though he wished her to say something. I was sure he felt that her co-operation in their work for the wild creatures warranted her right to the expression of her own ideas, and he was not in any wise fearful that she would not do the cause justice.

"Our first attempts at making the nestin' boxes wasn't very successful," volunteered Mrs. Watson. "I had forgotten the measurements of some of the holes which diffrent birds must have fer doors, so a few o' my fust wren houses was gobbled up by spar-rers an' other small birds. But jist as soon as we got the bulletins from the gov'ment, why, we changed all o' them ole ones an' never after that made any mistakes uv that kind.

"Almost any kind uv a box'll furnish them good quarters, but the openin's must be jist right, else these particular bodies won't pay no 'tention to 'em. We foun' out that it makes a diffrence, too, jist how the roof sets on some o' these bird homes. An' which way the door faces is another matter yuh mustn't fergit, 'coz all o' these thin's must be jist as near what is natur'l to 'em as possible."

"We all luffed dreadful at mother one

day," related Watson, when his wife had finished telling about their experiences. "We didn't hev no ole dead trees on the place. Fact is, we hadn't been on the farm long nuff to hev any sich thing. One day we all saw a big flicker, one o' them woodpeckers—they fellers what go 'roun' drummin' on the top o' the house, er the barn roof, er on the big trees, lookin' fer grubs. Mandy said he seemed like he wanted ter build a nest, though she hadn't seen no mate anywhers 'roun'. So her an' the childern got their heads together an' made er box, an' afore I got home that noon from the fur field, where I was plowin', they had the thin' nailed up in er tree 'roun' behin' the barn.

"Mr. Woodpecker, he flew inter that air tree, up above the box, an' I could see he had his eye on Mandy's new home fer 'im, an' then he'd drum fer dear life, an' then he'd say, 'If—if—if—if!'—jist like that—seemed to me to be makin' fun o' that air box, I thought. All uv a sudden he lit right on the edge o' the hole,—an' blessed if he didn't go right in! My, but he was gone a long time, seemed ter me. When he come out he flew off inter another tree, an' how he did laff—leastways, I thought he did!"

"No, he didn't laff, nuther, Jim Watson," declared Mrs. Watson. "He jist was a tellin' that mate o' his'n that some fr'en's had sot up a bran'-new kind uv a home fer 'em, an' fer her ter come 'long 's fast as she could—that's what he said!"

"Anyhow," Jim answered soothingly, "I went ter see how thin's was a-comin', in er day er two. It was 'long toward dark; an' what do yuh think I saw a-settin' up on top o' that air box? A good-sized owl blinkin' at me fer all he was wuth! An' then I did laff! Mandy had made the hole fer the woodpecker, an' it was big ernuff fer a owl, an' he an' his mate cabbaged it right there. What do yuh know 'bout that!"

"Do yuh let them pesky thin's stay 'roun' your place?" said Tom.

"Yuh bet we do! Don't hev ter hev no cats 'roun' when a pair o' ole owls live about the barnyard," answered Jim. "We don't care fer cats—ruther hev the birds. We can't hev cats an' birds, too—at least, we can't; mebbe yuh folks kin."

The children of both families having become tired of playing, sought out their elders and joined the circle on the grass beneath the tree. One of the Wade boys—I think it was Johnny—said to his mother just about the time Jim Watson finished his remarks about the cats: "Lissen, ma! Why can't we all go over ter Mr. Watson's place some Sunday an' see them air nice bird houses an' other fixin's?"

"That's a good idee, Johnny, an' we'll go over ter see 'Par'dise' jist 's soon 's we kin," volunteered Farmer Wade before his wife could answer the boy's question.

## CHAPTER VIII

Nature never did betray  
The heart that loved her.  
—Wordsworth.

The happy-go-lucky manner in which all of the children squatted upon the ground caused Mrs. Wade to gasp for breath. Before their visitors had arrived she had called her children before her and delivered the following ultimatum to them: "You kids all got yer best bib-an'-tucker on terday, an' I want yer ter keep yerselves as decent-lookin' as yuh kin while them folks stay on the place. An', above all thin's, Clarissy, don't squat down on the ground every time yuh git a chanct, er them clean white clothes 'll look a fright!"

Clarissa remembered when it was too late, and as she tumbled happily on the ground, in the midst of the mixture of grass and weeds growing rank about them, she glanced quickly in the direction of her mother. But Mrs. Wade was too busily occupied with the stories that were being told by different members of the Watson household to notice what was happening to her oldest girl.

Irrepressible Johnny, he of the gun-bear-

ing fame on the farm, looked at his sister in horror as he saw her stretch herself out at full length at the feet of Jimmy Watson, who held the center of the stage at that time, while he told about the bluebirds, the flickers, the blackbirds and the robins that lived amid such peace and plenty over their way.

The junior Watson appeared not to notice Clarissa's presence, or, if he did, I failed to see any change of countenance as he went on talking. Each one of Jim Watson's girls and boys knew his subject perfectly. Nothing seemed to disconcert these rugged youngsters as they talked learnedly about one plan or another they had adopted for care of all of the wild-life in their community.

Jimmy was not embarrassed by the nearness of the thirteen-year-old girl, as she lounged comfortably in front of him. His whole heart was engaged in the effort to deliver his message to the adults and children sitting close to him. As he continued to relate the many things that happened every day "over our way," among the birds on the farm and in the vicinity, the smaller children gathered before him and either stood or sat gazing upon him with all degrees of rapture pictured upon their faces.

Mother and Father Watson gave each other a kindly glance that spoke volumes, and nodded as the young story-teller talked about what was to be gained by intimate



contact with wild bird-life. He acted as though he could not say enough about the co-operation of birds and farm-life.

The boy was scarcely through his story, when his baby sister of six years, Lucy, spoke up and said: "Why, Jimmy, yuh didn't say one f'ing 'bout the bird-baths, an' where we feed 'em, an' what they do in the water every time we go out to look at 'em!"

"Yuh see, Mr. Wade," interposed Mrs. Watson, in order to relieve her daughter's embarrassment, "our little girl here is turribly interested in her bird famblies. Why, she kin hardly eat her breakfast uv a morn-in' afore she's out o' the house in all kinds uv weather, jist ter git er look at some uv the feathered things what live everywhere 'bout us."

When Mrs. Watson had finished speaking she turned toward Sally Wade and smiled in a kindly manner. Tears filled the eyes of Mrs. Wade, and she would have answered similarly if she could have done so, but her heart was too full to make the effort at that moment.

Mandy Watson looked at Tom Wade and said: "Won't yuh take us out to the orchard back there? I thought I saw somethin' what looked like a bird house out in one o' them trees as we come into the gate."

"No yuh didn't nuther—th' ain't no sich thing on the place!" exclaimed Farmer Wade. "I hain't seen nary a one in the hull

valley. I guess yuh folks's got the only ones in this part o' the country."

The farmer's wife acted as though she wanted to say something, but, instead of doing so, she arose hurriedly to her feet, mumbling unintelligibly as she started off. Her husband looked at her frowningly and turned away. I called to her as we began our walk toward the orchard, and said: "What were you going to say, Mrs. Wade?"

"Nothin' now," she replied, as all scrambled away eager to get to the orchard, where we were soon inspecting what Mrs. Watson had called a bird house.

The Watsons knew they had seen nothing that looked in any wise like a bird house, but they were so anxious to seize upon every opportunity afforded them at the moment to teach the younger members of this family a lesson that would not soon be forgotten that they allowed the others to believe they were in earnest.

The children of both families mingled freely in a romping run toward the dying fruit trees. Their parents and myself walked along slowly, talking about the subject nearest to the heart of each one just at that moment—the wild birds. As we passed beneath the apple trees Mandy Watson pointed at what she had seen from the roadway. It was a big tent-caterpillar's nest spun among the limbs of the very best apple tree on the farm. No one of the youngest of the Watson children ever had seen such a thing.

Dainty little Lucy looked inquiringly at her mother and said, "Why, mother, we hain't got them things over to our house has we?"

Before her mother could answer her Tom Wade spoke up rather grudgingly, "No, Lucy, yer pa don't keep no sich things over on his place!"

Jim Watson smiled upon his daughter and turning to Wade said, "No sirree, Tom, yuh bet we don't. All my kiddies know that. My oldest girl an' boy seen a few on 'em in a neighbor's orchard a few years ago,—but they don't see 'em there no more, I tell yuh!"

"The birds don't allow a caterpillar on the place, Tom," explained Mandy Watson. "They don't come no more to spin their homes in the shade trees along our line fences over the back way. Yuh know we don't have sich things as shade trees. We jist plant fruit an' nut trees wherever we want shade an' in that way we git somethin' from every tree on the place. What's the use clutterin' up the ground with trees what ain't produc-in' their keep? We all think produc-in' trees is jist as ornamental as is them what air jester look at."

I made close observations of every feature in my immediate surroundings thinking I might detect some signs of wild bird-life, but I was disappointed. Evidently no bird had been in that region for a very long time. These wary creatures must give the place a wide berth. I was certain that word must

have gone forth among the wild birds that this farm was to be avoided if their lives were of any value to them.

By the time we slower going travellers had reached the tree housing the tent caterpillar's nest, Jimmy Watson was discoursing learnedly and interestedly to his audience of youngsters. He had severed the limb from the tree and was holding it in his hand as he talked. As he spoke a number of fuzzy, wriggling worms (larvae) crawled unconcernedly from one point to another of the limb in his hand. He enlarged upon the fact that a small, brownish moth laid the eggs in circles about the smaller limbs and twigs of the apple and other trees, these hatched into worms, caterpillars, and at once spun for themselves a big tent-web for their home. Then they preyed upon the foliage of the trees until they reached a certain age when they spun, each for himself, a cozy cocoon in which about two weeks were passed, and upon emerging as a moth eggs were again laid which wintered on the tree twigs.

Jimmy was careful to tell us that it was the business of all of the woodpeckers to "git after them air eggs in winter!" He said also that the nuthatch, the little brown creeper and the chickadee were faithful destroyers of pests of this order. All of which information was news to the girls and boys of the Wade family.

This youthful conservationist had an eager neck-stretching audience and he swayed each

one before him like a natural born orator. I stood with the other adults in the background to watch the effect of the boy's words. I was pleased with the changes in the faces of those whom he addressed. I discovered the quickening of intelligence in more than one little fellow's physiognomy. In particular the expressions on the faces of Wade and his wife interested me greatly.

Scarcely could I believe my ears when Tom blurted out during a lull in the insect lecture, "Well, I'll be durned! Who'd a thought the kid knowed so much as that?"

"His mother's the best teacher of sich thin's to the little folks I ever heerd," broke in Jim Watson. "Yuh'd orter a seen the way she learned me them thin's when we was fust married!" And the farmer laughed heartily at the remembrance.

We followed the girls and boys who were a few rods ahead of us excitedly chasing a fat, roly-poly gopher into his burrow. At about the same instant one of the boys espied a female field mouse with several tiny babies clinging tenaciously to her. Evidently all were on their way to their own quarters when discovered. As the kiddies made after her with a yell she scuttled quickly into a near by and unused hole of some other rodent to escape her pursuers.

"That looks strange ter us, eh, Mandy?" said Jim Watson.

"We let the hawks an' owls git all the rats, mice, gophers and lots o' the big in-



secks in our neighborhood," quietly responded Mandy to the group walking along the trail.

It was getting late and chore-time was near. Mandy turned to her husband and informed him that, "it's time ter crank the ole 'gas-wagon' fer we've got lots o' thin's ter do when we git home!"

"When you folks a comin' over, Tom?" Watson called out to his host. "Yuh know the kiddies an' their ma have a good many interestin' thin's ter show anyone comin' 'round our place. I'll tell yuh what let's do—yuh all just pile inter the ole buckboard nex' Sunday after meetin' is out an' come over ter dinner—all on yuh!"

"Whad-yuh say, Sally?" Tom asked his wife. "Fer my part I'd like ter go. I want ter see them air bird fixin's agin, I do!"

"Say, lissen, ma," interrupted Clarissa. "I'm jist sick o' stickin' 'round home all the time—come on let's go!"

"Yuh said we c'u'd go, pa,—but I don't keer 'bout seein' any ole bird-bath—not me!" put in gun-fame Johnny.

"If they wants us," replied Sally Wade to her husband, "we'll all go an' have dinner with 'em and see them air thin's. I'm goin' ter see 'em anyhow!"



## CHAPTER IX

I love to wander through the woodlands hoary,  
In the soft light of an autumnal day,  
When Summer gathers up her robes of glory,  
And like a dream of beauty fades away.

—Sarah Helen Whitman.

Gun-Grabbing-Johnny Wade — I had so dubbed the boy the first time I met him—called to me from behind a stack of hay out in his father's meadow a couple of days after the visit of the Watson's to his home. "Say, lissen! I ain't goin' over ter Watson's nex' Sunday. I want ter go a huntin' an' dad says I can't hev the ole gun. He says I ain't ol'nuff ter go huntin'—wha'd yuh say 'bout it?"

"I think your father is right," I replied to the little fellow, for Johnny was small for 12 years of age. "At any rate the gun belongs to him I suppose; so I would do as he says if I were you."

"But I jist snuk the ole thin' outen the house an' was goin' ter stick it under the hay in this stack. I was jist hidin' it when I seen yuh a comin' 'long," persisted the boy.

"Is it a pretty good gun, Johnny?" I queried carefully.

"Yuh bet she is fer a ole thin' like her.

She don't miss many thin's when dad fires her; but I ain't sich a good shot as he is. An' then she kicks the stuffin' outen me sometimes an' it makes me mad as er hornet," admitted the youngster. "But she's a good ole gun, all right, all right!"

"What use have you for a gun around here?" I hazarded.

"Tha ain't 's much as they used ter be coz dad's killed 'bout everythin' in this part o' the country," evaded the boy.

"I think you'll have a good time over to the Watson ranch next Sunday and I believe you will see a good many things of great interest to you. You'd better let hunting go for a few years until you know just what it means to be killing everything that runs, flies or crawls," I advised. "And then, too, if you leave the gun out here in the stack it will rust dreadfully. Your father would notice that at once and then you wouldn't get the new gun he promised you a few weeks ago."

I left him where he was and cut off across the fields into the desert that bordered the place on the west. Occasionally I looked back and so long as I was in sight of the haystack I could see the small figure standing about where he was when I came upon him.

It was the next Saturday afternoon that my tramp took me into the neighborhood of the Wade home again, so I stopped to have a chat with the mother and her children at the

house. The air was full of calls from one to the other as they made ready for the trip across the township to "Paradise" the next day. I could see that preparations of an unusual character were going forward. The clothes line was heavily weighted with carefully washed clothing.

A big washtub of water was warming in the sunshine of that hazy summer afternoon. I knew that every kidlet on the place was doomed to get a bath in a very few minutes. So I stayed but a short time and as I walked away I told Mrs. Wade that I had been invited to be a member of the dinner party for the next day at the Watson ranch.

I had seen Jim Watson once during the week following the visit to the Wade home and he greeted me with, "Be sure ter come early nex' Sunday fer dinner—jist ter see them kid's eyes bung out when they git to our place," and he laughed softly as he drove away.

I was up and away early the following day for I had a jaunt of about 20 miles ahead of me in order to reach the meeting house near "Paradise" before services were over. The Watson two-cylinder was parked alongside the tie-rail at one side of the building. I slipped quite unobserved into the rear seat just as the people rose to sing the closing hymn. I had hoped to get there so I could sit and rest for a half hour before dismissal, but I arrived too late for any such luxury.

The concluding prayer was scarcely said

before I was on my way out of the front door. A number of friends greeted me warmly as I stood waiting for the Watson family to reach their car. While I spoke with those around me I made note of the wild bird-life in the enclosure. I commented upon the fact that meadow-larks, juncos, robins, house finches, Audubon warblers and yellow warblers hunted for insects among the trees and upon the grounds around the buildings. A pleased youngster pointed significantly to a nice bird sanctuary sign surmounting a post and said, "That's why they love ter stay 'round here!"

"Paradise" was about a mile off to the south of the meeting house. I believed another mile or so would warm me up to greater capabilities at dinner-time, so I invited Jimmy Watson to walk to his home with me. I knew he would be glad to have such a tramp for he greatly enjoyed the open and I figured that a few minutes with him before the dinner guests arrived would be of much value to both of us.

Sally and Tom Wade with their keenly alive five girls and boys did not arrive until more than an hour after we reached the Watson home. Everything was in readiness to sit down to the sumptuous repast about three-quarters of an hour after the arrival of the guests. Mrs. Watson knew the girls and boys would claim some time in going over the place before she was ready to announce dinner and she planned for just such a con-

dition. And then she was not quite certain that Tom Wade would not demand to be shown "them bird fixin's" before he sat down to eat.

I had purposely strayed out into the beautifully set orchard a little before the expected arrival of the Wades. The orchard was not far from the roadway, just at sufficient distance not to tempt neighborhood boys when the trees were laden with the wonderful fruit they bore each year. I could see plainly the facial expressions of each one of the family as their rig passed by me, going slowly on its way to the front gate. Yes, Johnny Wade was there, too, face shining and eyes bright in anticipation. I was glad to see Johnny!

The sight of his face alone was worth the tramp of 20 miles to me. Smothered exclamations from each one of them reached me. One or the other would notice something hitherto unseen, new and attractive, and then would rush forth comments of surprise and great delight. I slipped around into the back yard to take part in the greeting as they tumbled out of the buckboard.

Clarissa went directly up to Jimmy and began to talk to him as though she had seen him every day since the Sunday visit at their home. She appeared to have grown an inch or more during the week! She was a vigorous child of the open air and a splendid type of country life found in the valley, and she acted more at home and more at ease with the boy than she had been a week before.



Jimmy was equal to the occasion and at once began to tell her of the various features of attraction his home and its surroundings offered. The younger children mingled happily but under some restraint. The adults made the usual comments upon the weather, the crops and their Sunday services.

Watson and Wade put up the team and came slowly toward the back porch of "Paradise." A few minutes were given over to the relief of all embarrassment of the visitors and when the strangeness wore off everyone appeared to be ready to do justice to the coming dinner.

A large mellow-toned dinner bell was rung by one of the Watson children. I believe it was little Lucy all spick-and-span in clean white clothes and shoes, wearing a nice white apron very daintily, who sounded the welcome announcement of dinner.

The children filed into the house and out on to the big south porch almost bursting with anticipation. Never before had they seen a dinner table spread upon a vine-clad veranda. Clarissa was about the only one of the Wade family who appeared to be wholly comfortable. In some way she had been directed to a seat beside Jimmy. Again this youth and maiden took their coming together as a matter of course and as soon as all were seated each began to talk to the other about those things that made the greatest appeal to him. School days, games, life on the ranch, young people's societies and other



topics were discussed at length, and then Jimmy diplomatically steered the conversation around to his pet subject, that of caring for the wild folk on earth.

I sat directly across the table from this pair of delightfully innocent humans and heard much of their conversation. The boy was holding up the reputation of the Watson family with honor. The girl said much of small consequence, laughed heartily at her seat-mate's opinions upon some matters and was as serious-minded as a 25-year-old when the time for gravity came.

Such a bountiful dinner as that was!

I divided my time between using my utmost effort to do justice to the eatables, listening to the hum of voices around me and occasionally venturing an opinion when appealed to by some eager talker. My appetite was like that of the Wade children's—a coming one!

As we ate we laughed and when everyone at the table passed up his plate for a second helping of chicken dumplings and rich gravy, much merriment was occasioned. A huge dish of creamy mashed potatoes crowned with a coronet of golden-yellow butter was passed to each one to be mixed in with the gravy floating upon one's plate. Crisp, freshly pulled vegetables and perfectly ripened fruit from their own garden and trees, preserves, jams, sweet pickles and richly browned pie, with cake of two kinds, made all of us as happy



FIG. 7. A Pair of Baby Robins.

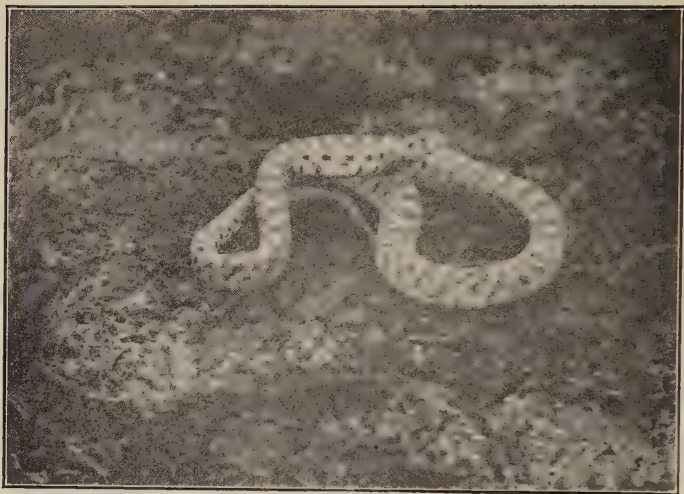


FIG. 8. A Gopher Snake.



FIG. 9. Female Flicker at Nest Opening.

as food of the best quality could possibly accomplish.

Almost before anyone at the table showed any signs of quitting, Tom Wade said to his hostess, "My land, but this sure is a treat, Mrs. Watson! If I don't stop eatin' now I won't be able to walk out to the orchard ter see them bird fixin's. Jimmy, can't we break 'way now an' you come an' show us a bird bath?"

## CHAPTER X

The happiest heart that ever beat  
Was in some quiet breast  
That found the common daylight sweet  
And left to heaven the rest.

—John Vance Cheney.

“Lissen, Dad!” hoarsely whispered Gun-Grabbing Johnny across the table from his father. “Don’t go jist yit. Can’t I hev ’nother piece o’ that air pie an’ some more cake? Nobody else ain’t through eatin’ yit!” I was sure I could hear tears falling so realistic was that appeal.

Jim Watson’s ears were always open to such inward demands, especially coming from youthful depths, and like a good providing parent and host he overheard the cry of the boy and smilingly said, “Course yuh kin, Johnny; jist pass yer plate up ag’in! ’Fore yuh eat that air pie, though, jist’s well have some more o’ these chicken dumplin’s an’ gravy—I’m goin’ ter hev some,” and the farmer reached for the boy’s plate and covered it with another generous helping of that delectable mixture.

“Yuh’ll make yerself sick, Johnny Wade!” called his mother from her place at the far end of the long table. “Ain’t yuh ’shamed

uv yerself ter eat so much? Yuh've had one piece o' pie an' goodness knows how much cake, an' that's 'nuff fer anyone fer one meal."

"Please let the boy eat all he wants ter, Sally," pleaded Mrs. Watson in a kindly tone. "Yuh know boys what is growin', like yours an' mine be, need lots ter eat three times a day. An' a change o' cookin' does any kid good."

The Watson parents sat talking to those of their guests still remaining at the table, each vieing with the other to make this meal one never to be forgotten by any member of the family. Only a few of the youngest children of both families had begged to be released. They made special pleas for liberation from the formalities imposed by reason of the visit, and sought outdoor scenes and pleasures.

Johnny was not the only one at the table who indulged his appetite to the fullest, for Jimmy stayed and had another piece of pie and some more jam and preserves, thereby proving not only the attractiveness of his mother's food, but also the abundance of his capacity.

Tom Wade was still eating when he called out to Jimmy that he wanted him to show him the bird bath. Tom wanted to reawaken the interest in this topic while all were listening, in order that he might gain more information along lines in which he felt so woefully ignorant. The fact was that Wade was



becoming ashamed of himself for the stand he took in such matters among his neighbors. For many years he had urged the wholesale killing of wild-life of all kinds and, now that he was being shown another and apparently better side of the question, he was anxious to get better acquainted with certain features without his family suspecting his actions.

In his every question there was concealed the sting of a bit of fun-making at the expense of the serious efforts being made by his rancher friends at "Paradise" as well as in their community. It seemed such a trifling matter to him to make an effort to save a little bird's life! It was good-natured railery, to be sure; meant well and said with a tone of kindness that could not be overlooked—but always there was that hidden "biff!" of Wade's that could not be misunderstood.

The third helping that had been piled upon Johnny's plate was nearly out of sight when I detected a pie-like yearning take possession of the boy's face. I was sitting quite near the hostess, and just at the critical moment I slyly called her attention to the boy's empty plate. Instantly the area that previously had been covered with chicken dumpplings and other savories was o'erspread with another cut of pie and some more cake. The eyes of the little gourmand almost popped out of his head! I thought I observed a sly effort on his part to steal one hand down

in the region of his middle. I was certain he was attempting to loosen his trousers-band!

He looked across at me, smiled contentedly, drew a long breath and attacked that heap of dessert as though he were a harvest hand. I saw something through the screen just then, away out beyond the vines and shrubbery—something that made me laugh!

There was little left on Mrs. Watson's table for the next day's meals—left-overs, some people call them, and they turn up on Monday after a big Sunday dinner—but I was sure she was too happy to miss them!

Smilingly happy, filled with a great contentment, even as Ichabod Crane bade adieu to the groaning sideboard of old Baltus Van Tassel, each guest stood in his place and tried to tell his entertainers how much he had enjoyed their hospitality. So far as I was concerned, I thought no previous dinner had ever filled so many wrinkles and interstices within my interior as did this one.

Seemingly with one thought all turned toward the garden and orchard. Mrs. Watson allowed the table to stand as they had left it. Another hour, even another day, would suffice in which to clean up the remnants of such a feast! She, with her husband and her girls and boys, had an opportunity at hand which, they declared, must not be slighted. Without mentioning it, I know each one felt he had a group of possible converts in sight, and the process of

complete conversion was to begin immediately after the cravings of appetite had been satiated. What rare diplomacy the owners of "Paradise" exhibited!

"Come on, Clarissy," cried out Jimmy-the-Second, "let's have a race out to the closest bird bath in the orchard!" Neck and neck they ran, and the boy turned on his last bit of speed in order to beat her to a certain point—when suddenly he warned, "Not so fast, Clarissy! Take a look at them birds a-duckin' in that air bath over there, will yuh? We must go slow now," he said as they came to a halt, both breathing hard.

Sure enough, there were two or three English sparrows, a robin, a flicker and a blue-bird bobbing up and down in the water and sitting on the rim of the bath, drying their feathers. The shallow basin of the bath was elevated a little more than four feet above the ground. As each one saw the birds enjoying themselves so contentedly together, Tom remarked to Watson, "English sparrers! Do yuh let them pesky critters live on yer place?"

"All birds are welcome here," replied Mandy and Jim Watson in one breath.

"That's what I say, too," chimed in Sally Wade. "Every bird is some good 'round anyone's home an' anywhere else, 'specially when they live in the country!"

"I kin see the good o' some birds," answered Wade, ignoring his wife's remark,

“but I’ll be danged if I kin see any good in them sparrers!”

“I wouldn’t a had no alfalfa at all this year if them little English sparrers hadn’t a stood by me,” commented Watson quietly. “My neighbor over in the ‘jinin’ farm wouldn’t hev ’em on the place, so they all come over here—an’ he cut only ’bout one crop! We give ’em a nice place fer their nests, lots ter eat, an’ they help us fight in-secks and weed-seeds the hull year ’round. They’re noisy, hev big famblies an’ raise Ned sometimes; but they don’t bother any other birds we’ve got, no matter what other pepul say ’bout ’em, so we’re goin’ ter stick up fer ’em everlastin’ly!”

Every one of the tried-in-the-fire conservationists of the Watson family stood ready to champion the cause of any wild thing that came within the confines of their line fences, offered it a home and protection, and insisted that such creatures should have a square deal in any other locality with which they were acquainted.

The pupils they had at their elbows that day, seemingly ready and eager to be taught the first principles of the cause, looked at each other, wondering, no doubt, who was right and whose opinion he should uphold. No one attempted any arguments! The reasonableness of the effort they were furthering must make its own way into the brains of their visitors. Each one felt confident, I am certain, that the comparison of the home

surroundings of the two families would teach the best lesson ever scanned.

In quiet, orderly troops these friends went from one feature to another, inspecting first one bird home and then a feeding shelter, a bird bath and storm and feeding station—exclaiming at the unusual conveniences offered the birds. The first bath examined was a revelation to all of them, but when they came upon another, in another part of the orchard, of a wholly different pattern, this, too, must receive their homage and meticulous consideration. Its makeup was inspected, the cost of the materials composing it was figured out right in front of the entire assemblage, and the pattern was discussed most carefully. No adult or child moved while Mandy Watson and her girls and boys told of the plans for making the fixture, the materials employed, and the actual cost, not counting the labor. “The labor,” said Mandy, “was one of love!”

“Well, I’ll be durned!” softly voiced Tom Wade. “‘A labor o’ love,’ eh? I never looked at it jist like that afore.”

“Say, lissen,” interrupted Johnny Wade while his father was ruminating so quietly. “What’s that thin’ over there, Mr. Watson? Jist ’round the corner o’ the orchard there—I seen a bunch o’ quail ist fly outen there. Gee! I wisht I had our ole shotgun—them ’u’d make fine eatin’!”

“That’s a shelter an’ a feedin’ station, Johnny,” replied Watson. “Sure yuh would-



n't kill them pretty birds, would yuh?"

"Yuh betcha I would—'f I had a chanet!" ventured the boy.

"They don't do no harm ter nobody," chipped in Jimmy-the-Second, who had joined the group with Clarissa and had heard the question and the answer. "Quails is the enemies uv many kinds of insecks what eat the wheat, an' they live entirely, when the ground ain't covered with snow, on insecks what we hev ter fight when we hain't got no quails. An' in the winter I see 'em a-shakin' the weed-seeds outen the weeds and a stuffin' theirselves full on' em. Nobody can't kill no quails on our place, I tell yuh! We feed 'em in winter 'round here—we do!"

Clarissa sidled up closer to Jimmy after he had finished his speech, and stood admiringly with him against her own brother. She had seen enough at "Paradise" that day to convince her that her father and her gun-bearing brother were in the wrong. "Yuh won't kill no more at home, Johnny Wade, yuh see 'f yuh do—not if I kin help it, yuh won't!" And the girl looked every inch a woman as she threw down the gauntlet to her brother.

"No, I don't think that kid o' mine 'll kill no more quails, er any other bird—an' I guess I kin help it—an' I b'lieve I kin stop it, too," announced Tom Wade.



## CHAPTER XI

Crown'd with the sickle and the wheaten sheaf,  
While Autumn, nodding o'er the yellow plain,  
Comes jovial on. —Thomson.

"Come on, folks," interposed Mandy Watson, "there's one fixin' in another part o' the farm we hain't visited yit. The one we're goin' to is 'bout the most useful one we've got on the ranch."

Wise Mandy, mother of four girls and boys, wedded to a husband with whom she had farmed for about fifteen years, what experiences had been hers! She sniffed trouble in Tom Wade's voice when he said he could stop the activities of the boy Johnny. The mere fact that Clarissa had lined up her sympathies with Jimmy-the-Second, against even the teachings of her father, made the Watson mother and partner the least bit disturbed.

Johnny Wade glanced at his father inquiringly and said, "Huh! How long yuh bin thinkin' that a way, dad? Didn't yuh tell me jist t'other day yuh'd buy me a bran-new shotgun? That's what yuh said—jist them words."

"Maybe I did, son; but I hain't got it yit.

An' afore I do git it we'll hev some talks 'bout this 'ere biznis, an' all on us is goin' ter try ter fin' out the truth. I've done a lot o' shootin' in my time, son, but I ain't a goin' ter do no more 'till we fin' out 'bout it an' see if it's best not ter kill the birds."

"That's fair 'nuff, Mr. Wade," smilingly stated Jimmy-the-Second before either his mother or father could answer the visiting farmer. And turning around to Gun-Grabbing Johnny, the boy concluded: "I'll help yuh, Johnny, the best I kin ter show you-all jist what's best ter do an' how ter do it."

"My husban' an' myself want ter offer our help, too, Tom," said Mandy. "Not that there hain't anything 'bout the subject our Jimmy don't know—fer he does—but ther more ther' be who bear these 'ere burdens, I've found out, the better we all git erlong."

Once more Clarissa found herself at Jimmy's elbow as we trudged along the trail to the far-away appliance that had been erected for a special purpose in that part of the farm. She no longer acted as though she wanted to laugh at everything said by members of the party. Her face wore a serious expression and she asked questions of Jimmy, his mother and father, even inquiring about statistics concerning the number of bird species living in their region and the time of the appearance and disappearance of each one. "Of course," she interjected, "I know a robin an' a medderlark an' a sparrer when I see one; an' I guess I know a

bluebird, coz it's blue. But I don't know what these little birds eat when they come back here the fust time in spring."

I could see at once that the cause of conservation was going to have another convert numbered in its ranks. The girl had allied herself with the Watson family more closely than she knew. Jimmy-the-Second beamed upon her and talked away as though there were no others in sight or hearing. He explained that the food of all songbirds consisted mainly of insects that are pests which eat enormous quantities of the farmer's crops annually.

He told them further that the ranchers and horticulturists spent many millions of dollars each year to fight insects and rodents that are the natural prey of wild bird-life. That when hawks and owls and harmless snakes are killed "jist fer fun!" mice, gophers, moles, big grasshoppers, crickets, rabbits, and such creatures, destroy huge quantities of food that belong to the farmer and which he ought to harvest.

"Hain't you never hunted ducks er squirrels er sage-hens, er shot birds, er robbed bird's nests anywheres?" snapped Gun-Grabbing Johnny.

"No, I hain't, Johnny," quietly responded Jimmy. For, while the Wade boy was asking the question, Jimmy had turned unconsciously toward his mother, as though he was looking for a bit of moral support. "In the fust place, we don't keep no gun on the

farm—we hain't got no use fer one. An' then mother an' father has learned all on us that it ain't right ter kill anything jist fer fun. Mother says all these birds an' snakes has got jist as good a right ter live as I hev, an' I never felt like killin' any uv 'em."

Sally Wade looked admiringly at her neighbor's son, stepped over to him and, patting him on the back, said, as her husband scowled at her a little: "That's jist the way I've allus felt, Jimmy Watson, only my husband didn't see it that a way. An' every time I'd try ter tell my children that it wan't right ter kill the birds, my man Tom 'u'd say, 'Aw, what do yuh wimmen know 'bout sich thin's!' An' then I'd keep still."

With Sally Wade and her daughter Clarissa standing near Jimmy, seemingly espousing the cause he championed, Tom Wade smiled rather faint-heartedly as he averred: "I used ter think that a way, too; but somehow er other the huntin' fever kinder got hold on me when I was a big boy, an' when I got ter shootin' at everythin' what come on the place, I jist didn't stop ter think o' the possible harm, an' blazed away 'thout knowin'."

These little talks and explanations were carried on as we walked toward the point indicated by Mrs. Watson. As we approached the largest and most pretentious effort the Watsons had attempted for wildlife conservation each visitor looked keenly

at the edifice, for so it might have been called, standing in bold relief just in front of us.

The structure was built about ten feet above the ground and had the appearance of a park aviary, only it was of smaller size. The large, round post supporting the superstructure firmly in all winds and weathers was carefully covered with galvanized iron from the ground to its upper extremity. "That's ter keep off cats what might stray in here an' try ter climb up ter git the birds in summer or any other time," explained Jimmy.

The upper end of the pillar was housed in by a craftily constructed four-cornered canopy of wood, built after the manner of a Swiss chalet. This structure was six feet square, and its four-sided, sharp-peaked roof sloped at an angle of about fifty-five degrees. This pitch afforded scant lodgment for snow and ice, and permitted the construction of dormer windows on the roof in a number of places. These additions made the structure look like a real toy house, but they offered ingress and egress to song and insectivorous birds of many species. The openings in these windows were not large enough to admit the smaller hawks and owls that might be tempted to raid the place because of the presence of suet, fat and lean meat within, so the house gave quiet sanctuary at all times.

A permanent lumber facing two feet deep was set immediately under the eaves. Sol-



idly spiked two-by-four crossbars were set in place, and a series of trays, with the edges beaded so that the food could not be so easily displaced, filled the commodious space beneath the roof.

There were four stories to this series of trays, each communicable with the other on all sides. Each tray led out on the roof through one or more gable windows. A pane of strong, clear glass was set in each portion of the roof, flush with the surface. This gave ample light to the feeding birds, even in the darkest days of winter.

Birds could make their entrance into this feeding sanctuary either from beneath the eaves or through the dormer windows. After the feathered visitors had become thoroughly acquainted with the ins and outs of this haven they usually selected the openings through the roof as doorways. All manner of food that assured bird-life warmth and nourishment was to be found on these shelves every hour of the year. Some member of the Watson family had entire charge of this building for a week at a time, and its every appointment was attended to with religious regularity; nothing ever was forgotten or left undone!

During the summer time this fixture was utilized also as a bath for the birds. In the winter season, when warmed water was necessary to the life of the visitors, the other drinking and bathing apparatus, quite near



the house, was put into operation. It was intended that the winter palace—for such it really was—might be used by the birds as roosting quarters in very stormy weather; and no spot under that capacious roof could be found on a winter's night when it was not occupied by a number of wild birds!

This “fixin’ ” made a great impression on the Wade family. But the one most affected by its beauty and its genuine utility was Tom Wade! He refused to be dragged away from its inspection. His wife gave him warning several times, and finally said to the deeply interested farmer: “It’s nigh on to sundown, Tom, an’ we’ve got a long drive ter make an’ lots o’ work ter do when we git home—so let’s go.”

Clarissa stepped near to her father and said as the man studied the feeding shelter: “Say, lissen, pa, can’t we make one o’ them thin’s?”

“Sure we kin, Clarissy, an’ if Jimmy here ’ll come over an’ learn us how ter start these thin’s right,” replied the father, “it won’t take us long ter git the swing on ’em.”

Clarissa turned a beaming face toward Jimmy and said, as a crimson wave suffused her countenance: “When kin yuh come over—soon?”

For the first time in his life the boy realized that he was talking to a girl! His face reddened furiously as all the members of both families listened for his reply: “Oh, I



FIG. 10. Male Bluebird and Bird House.

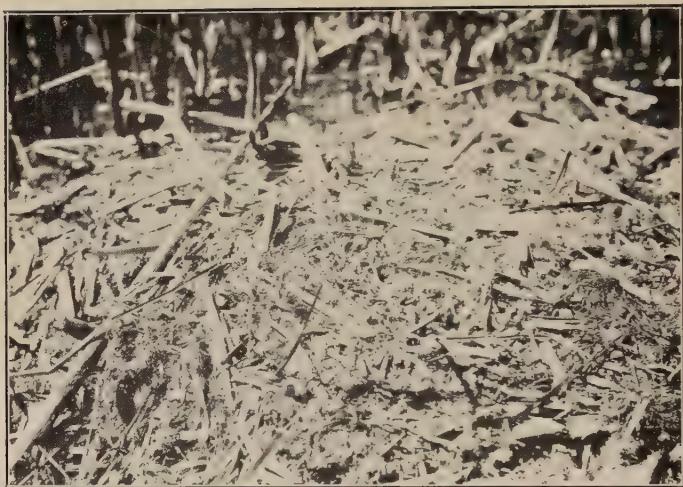


FIG. 11. Nest of Canadian Wild Goose, Covered by the Mother Goose as she goes away for food. Built on top of a Musk-rat House.



FIG. 12. Nest of the Above, Uncovered, Showing Six Large Eggs.

don't know—one o' these here days!"

Then all took their way toward the house, good-byes were said and thanks were given for the wonderful day. And the Wade buck-board passed slowly from "Paradise."

## CHAPTER XII

On my cornice linger the ripe black grapes ungathered;  
Children fill the groves with the echo of their glee,  
Gathering tawny chestnuts, and shouting when beside them  
Drops the heavy fruit of the tall black chestnut tree.  
—Bryant.

Clarissa and her mother did nearly all of the talking on the way home that Sunday afternoon, just before sundown. Tom Wade drove as rapidly as they could go with the load the old buckboard bore. All the way up the grade that led over the ridge into their arm of the valley the horses tugged bravely. It was a sandy dugway, not much used, and it was sorely in need of repair. Clarissa, Johnny and two other children jumped off to lighten the load as they began the steep ascent.

As Clarissa leaped over the low rear wheel on the uphill side of the vehicle and landed in sand up to her ankles, her mother called out to her: "See here, Clarissy, you're git-ting too big a girl to be jumpin' off a waggin that a way; ain't yuh never goin' ter remember that it's time ter stop sich kiddishness?"

"I wasn't thinkin' 'bout bein' a big girl, ma; I was jist plannin' a lot o' thin's ter do when I git a chanct ter make some bird



boxes an' a bath fer 'em," answered the girl. "An' the fust thin' I'm goin' ter do is to begin ter put out some feed fer them birds what I see once in a while flyin' off to one side o' our place. Mebbe they'll come down ter eat 'f they see the stuff out fer 'em. An' then nex' spring, when they come an' see the nice boxes out in the trees I'm goin' ter put up fer 'em they'll make nests there. Jimmy said the best time was ter put up these here fixin's in the fall, an' then, when spring comes an' the birds is all back fer the summer, the boxes won't look so new; they'll be more 'weathered,' as he said."

"Jimmy tole yuh a right lot o' thin's, didn't he, Clarissy?" replied her mother. "I seen yuh a talkin' a hull lot all over the place, you two—but no matter 'bout that; I'll help yuh all I kin, my girl, so we'll hev lots ter do after school is out each day now."

"Yes, ma, an' Johnny's got ter help, too, fer pa said he was goin' ter do a hull lot o' studyin' 'bout these thin's an' see who's right. I ain't afeard but what Jimmy an' his folk's right, I ain't!" hurriedly replied Clarissa.

"Haw — haw — haw!" sneered Johnny. "Whad do girls know 'bout makin' sich thin's, I'd like ter know!"

"An' unuther thing, pa," said the girl to her father, paying not the least attention to Johnny's interruption, "yuh said yuh'd see ter it that the ole shotgun was put away ter stay; didn't yuh, pa?"



"I'll take keer o' the ole gun, Clarissy. After I git through explainin' ter Johnny here all 'bout these here thin's we've seen an' heerd today, I guess Johnny'll come through all right; won't yuh, son?" said the father to this hunt-loving boy.

"Mebbe!" evaded that youngster, as he hung behind his sister. "But ain't we never goin' ter do no more huntin', dad? We don't hev ter give it all up, do we? Can't we kill a few quail er sage hens durin' the season, I'd like ter know?"

"Not while they's sca'ce as they be now, my boy. It don't pay ter go inter this thin' uv savin' one an' killin' unuther. Lots o' these birds what pepul hunt an' kill, yes, jist the same 's I've done all my life, air the most val'able birds we hev. I hain't never done nothin' by ha'ves, I hain't, an' now, when I'm beginnin' ter see why it is that the bugs an' the worms an' the grasshoppers eat up everythin' we raise, why, it stan's ter reason, don't it, that it's best ter stop?" announced the farmer.

"Yes, sir," meekly replied Gun-Grabbing Johnny.

Mrs. Wade looked admiringly at her oldest boy and, turning to her husband, said rather pointedly: "Yuh see what yer example all these years has done, Tom, an' now, when yuh see yer mistake, yuh find it hard ter make the boy see it in the new light."

"We hain't goin' ter hev no trouble with Johnny, mother, not if yuh leave it all ter

me," the rancher countered. "I b'lieve 'twon't be so hard ter convince him the same 's I've been convinced, if we go at it easy like."

"Yes, but me an' Clarissy ain't goin' ter leave it all ter you. Yuh know the way she acts she's got herself set on beginnin' right away ter make some o' these here houses an' baths fer the birds; an' I, fer one, hain't goin' ter stop her," rejoined his wife.

"That'll be easy!" chuckled the farmer as he called out for all to jump in the wagon. "Yuh see 'f tain't, Sally. When we once git started we'll hev the hull passel wantin' ter put up somethin' here, there an' all over the ranch."

"Chores, chores, everlastin' chores!" wailed the boy Johnny when the horses had been put up and he was told to "hustle up with them milk buckets!"

For some unaccountable reason there was a new feeling abroad on the Wade homestead that particular Sunday evening. The air was supercharged, seemingly, with a bit of the "juice" that had escaped from one of the high-tension lines that crossed in front of the house not far away. Something that snapped permeated the atmosphere. Johnny got a dose of it, and one of the younger boys, who was taking in the wood for the morning's fire, became entangled in the gust, and Clarissa gave a yell of triumph as she scuttled down toward the ditch for a bucket of water with which to make her mother's tea.

Never before had an entire family buckled down to the farm work that required being done at once, so quickly as did the Wades. When darkness came all were comfortably seated about the kitchen table. The coal oil lamp shone forth more brilliantly than was its wont. The milk had been strained and the pails cleaned and polished so quickly that mother and daughter scarcely could believe their eyes. The baby was in bed, and mother had had her tea. An air of expectancy blew in at every opening. The coolness of the late summer evening, freshened by the tingling atmosphere of the desert but a little way off, called for a bit of fire in the old fireplace.

"Lissen, dad, what we goin' ter make first?" coaxed Clarissa. "Yuh know Jimmy Watson said the quickest way ter git hold uv the birds was ter put out some water fer 'em when it's as dry as 'tis now. And then, when they find the water an' a little feed o' some kind 'round here, mebbe they'll come ter stay. He said all the birds wanted ter know was that you're a friend o' theirs."

"I guess Jimmy junior knows what he's talkin' 'bout, coz the looks o' their place over ourn tells that," softly admitted the girl's father.

Mrs. Wade smiled contentedly as she noted the great change coming over her husband. Although she herself had advocated the killing of the hawks that occasionally carried off a chicken, she did so because her husband had insisted that they were no good. Now

that she was learning the error of her way, this new endeavor made the greatest appeal to her sense of right and justice of any cause she had ever espoused. It enlisted her every sympathy and engaged her every effort. In her visions she could see a new house and barns going up out of the savings accumulated by allowing the wild creatures on their land and in their immediate vicinity to come in and assist them to care for their acres.

After they had been talking for a time about plans for the immediate relief of the land from insect and rodent pests, Johnny, who had been sitting quietly listening, but without participating in the conversation, spoke up pugnaciously: "Yuh goin' ter kill all o' them cats what we got 'round here, ma?"

"Jimmy says——" Clarissa started to say.

"Aw, who cares 'bout what Jimmy says?" blurted out Johnny.

"Never you mind, son," the boy's father quietly interrupted, "we all know that Jimmy's right, an' the best thing fer yuh ter do from now on is ter git in an' help all we kin—fer there's goin' ter be suthin' doin'!"

"Yes," Johnny Wade, "put in Clarissa, "yuh needn't think yuh know it all. Yuh never done nothin' fer a little bird 'cept ter kill it when yuh had the chanet!"

"There, that'll do, childern," remonstrated their mother. "There's 'nuff work in this bizniss fer all on us ter do, an' the more what takes hold right at first the quicker

we'll hev jist as good a farm an' as nice a house ter live in as the Watsons hev."

In a little while plans had been perfected for the first attempt to offer friendship and sustenance to the wild-life of that region. Each member of the Wade family—even the three-year-old, had been selected for the accomplishment of certain things. When the lights went out in the farmstead that Sunday evening, the happiest lot of children and grown-ups went to bed that ever had been heard of in that section of the country.

## CHATER XIII

No human gardener cares for thee  
Like bird, like beast, like buzzing bee.  
'Tis Nature tends to all thy wants—  
She knows thy ways, thy secret haunts.  
—Evelyn Hardy.

“Hey, lookee! Oh, Johnny, lookee!” hoarsely whispered Clarissa the morning after their visit to “Paradise,” as she slipped quietly into the boy’s room across the garret hall. “Jist look out o’ the winder, will yuh? There, right over in that tree in th’ aige o’ the orchard.”

Gun-Grabbing Johnny had been in the land o’ dreams when his sister so unceremoniously aroused him. He piled hurriedly out of bed to join her at the window. As he crossed the room he rubbed his eyes to be sure they were wide open, for Johnny didn’t want to miss anything. He chose a pane of glass that was the least dusty, and wiped it quickly with the sleeve of his nightshirt, grumbling all the time about “gittin’ up so early!”

“Right ’cross there in that ole apple tree nex’ to the fence. Don’t yuh see it?” urged Clarissa.

“Aw, I can’t see nothin’!” growled the boy. “What-yuh lookin’ at?”



"Yuh better rub some more sleep outen them eyes, Johnny Wade—there it sets, jist 's plain as day," exclaimed his sister. "Can't yuh see that bird out there?"

"Bird!" wailed Johnny.

"Yes, bird, yuh sleepy-head. Whad-yuh s'pose I was lookin' at?" asserted the girl with much force.

"Aw, that's one o' them mournin' doves. Don't yuh 'member how many dad an' me killed las' year when the season opened? He's the feller what eats all o' our wheat up!" declared her brother.

"Air them the bootiful birds we et las' year an' year before las', Johnny Wade?" interrogated Clarissa. "If they be, all I got ter say is that yuh won't never eat unuther one in this house!"

"Say, lissen, ma!" bawled out Johnny as he rushed into the hall and yelled to his mother. "Clarissy went an' woke me up jist ter come an' see a ole mournin' dove. Jist wait 'till I git my pants on an' git hol' uv the ole gun—I'll fix that feller!"

"No, yuh won't neither, Johnny Wade, will 'e, ma?" called the girl.

"Whad yuh kids fightin' 'bout up there this fine mornin', I'd like ter know?" responded the mother. "Clarissy, yuh come right down here an' help me git breakfas' ready jist 's soon as yer dressed. An', Johnny, git out o' there an' go help yer father with them chores. This 's Monday

mornin' an' I've got a big wash ter do when yuh kids git off ter school."

"I'll fix that air bird an' all the rest on 'em!" asserted the boy under his breath, as he slowly went downstairs on his way out of doors.

His mother heard him muttering to himself as he passed her in the kitchen, and she said very quietly: "What did you say, my boy?"

"Aw, nuthin'!" evaded the boy, as he passed on toward the door.

"Yes, yuh did, too. Don't tell me sich stuff. Come here, Johnny," called his mother. "Now, I want yuh an' Clarissy ter stop yer quarrelin' so much. What started that fuss upstairs this mornin'? Didn't I hear suthin' 'bout a bird when yuh yelled downstairs ter me? Answer me!—wasn't it?"

"Aw, Clarissy woke me up jist ter see a ole mournin' dove a-settin' out there in the orchard," answered the boy.

"An' what did yuh say back to 'er?" queried the mother very gently. Mrs. Wade had heard just enough of the conversation between her children upstairs that morning to realize that it must have been the subject dearest to her daughter's heart at that time—saving the birds—that aroused Johnny from his early-morning sleep and sent him into the hall to demand her interference.

"Nothin'!" exclaimed the youngster. "I jist said 'twas a ole mournin' dove like what dad an' me used ter kill, an' she said I'd

never kill no more—that's what she said!"

The mother put her arm around her son's shoulders and said to him in her tenderest voice: "Don't yuh think it's best to hev a few o' these nice birds 'round, Johnny? No matter if they do eat a little grain an' some garden stuff once in a while—ain't their presence wuth a lot to us, an' don't they eat 'nuff bugs an' sich stuff to pay fer what little they take?"

The boy hung his head for an instant and then said slowly: "I wouldn't mind 'f you an' dad 'u'd let me go duck huntin' sometimes."

"Some o' these days yuh'll be a bigger boy than yuh air now. An' yuh'll grow to be a big man, an' then yuh'll hev a chanet to answer all o' these questions yerself. Jist put it up to yerself, then, an' do whatever yuh think's best. Mother knows yuh'll do the right thing, Johnny; but up 'till then wouldn't it be nicer to let ma an' pa try ter set yuh on what we think's the right track?"

For an instant the boy's face was averted as he started off toward the barn. Just as he reached the gate he turned and said eagerly: "D'yuh think I might hev a gun o' my own one o' these days, ma?"

"Mebbe, if yuh happen ter want one when yuh git big 'nuff ter handle one properly," replied this wise counsellor.

Mrs. Wade realized that it would take very gentle handling on her part if her boy were ever convinced of the folly of killing song

and insectivorous birds around their home and elsewhere. She decided to talk the matter over with her husband and Clarissa that very day. She felt it was too serious a matter to go long without correction. She was convinced, as well, that her husband needed a little coaching in order to have him use his most persuasive arguments to convert their son to wild-life conservation.

Just as everybody sat down to breakfast the mother caught Clarissa in the pantry alone, puttin up school lunches, and she whispered: "Don't you say nothin' 'bout seein' that dove. I want to talk things over with yuh later today, my girl."

The black cloud that had overcast Johnny's sky earlier in the morning had been driven away by a light cloud-lifting and sky-clearing breeze that came bowling over the desert from the northwest. An eager, well-scrubbed face shone from across the table as the father asked for his coffee. The boy's alert appearance attracted his father's attention, and he said to him: "How'd yuh sleep las' night, Johnny? Any bad dreams? I dreamt we had the hull place all plastered over with bird boxes, an' drinkin' fountains, an' feedin' stations, an' shelters o' one kind er unther, 'till yuh c'u'd sca'ce see the trees anywhere on the farm."

Before Johnny could answer or Mrs. Wade could interfere, Clarissa said: "Say, lissen, pa, have we got any nails an' a ole saw that I can make one o' them feedin' stations to-

day? Jimmy said this was jist the time o' year to be settin' 'em up. Coz jist as soon as I git home from school I'm goin' to begin."

Johnny turned inquiringly toward his sister and began to grin. He was about to say something, when his little sister, two years younger than he, interrupted with: "An' I'm goin' to help her, too."

"Air yuh, my girl?" chuckled her father. "Well, I guess we kin scrape up 'nuff ole boards an' a hammer an' nails to make what you two kiddies want ter make. What yuh goin' ter do today, mother—wash er build shelters fer the birds?"

"I'll wash first, Tom. After I git the clothes hangin' out an' the childern are home from school I'll turn in an' help Clarissy an' Marthy build a nice feedin' stand fer them little birds," softly replied Mrs. Wade.

All this time Johnny sat eating as rapidly as he could, but his eyes scanned every face at the table and his ears heard every comment. For the first time he began to notice that he was the only one of the family that had not joined in the new project—and he was wondering!

Tom Wade turned to the boy and said: "What yuh goin' ter do when yuh git home from school today?"

The boy instantly replied: "What yuh want me ter do, dad?"

"They ain't much yuh kin do 'bout the place, son, but yuh better start the chores early, an' when I git in I'll see what's doin',"



the farmer ventured. "I've got ter go ter town today."

It was nip and tuck between Clarissa and Johnny that afternoon along about four o'clock to see who would reach home first. They came tearing up to the house across lots, leaving the two younger girls far in the rear. It was a most noteworthy performance on their part, for heretofore they had returned leisurely and by the longest route ever since they had been going to school.

Clarissa's longer legs and greater lung capacity won the day. She burst in upon her mother, who was working about the house, and excitedly exclaimed: "Lissen, ma, whadyuh think happened at school today? Why, the teacher had some pitchers o' birds an' boxes an' sich fer 'em ter eat out of, an' tole us all 'bout 'em, an' had a lot uv us draw 'em on the blackboard——"

"An' say, ma," stormed Gun-Grabbing Johnny, "yuh'd orter a-seen the pitcher I made uv a bird drinkin'——"

"Shut up, Johnny Wade—I'm tellin' ma 'bout it!" retorted Clarissa.

"There, childern—that'll do!" interrupted the mother in a kindly manner. "Seems ter me both on yuh learned some new idees ter-day, eh, my son?"



## CHAPTER XIV

Dry leaves upon the wall,  
Which flap like rustling wings and seek escape,  
A single frosted cluster on the grape  
Still hangs—and that is all.

—Susan Coolidge.

After Sally Wade had finished her week's washing she started out around the yards with her three-year-old boy, hunting suitable lumber with which to make such fixtures for the birds as she thought she and her children could easily construct.

She ransacked every nook and corner of the barn and sheds in her search. Under the granary she found a miscellaneous assortment of pieces, which she dragged into the light of day and piled up in a big heap. She was quite well repaid for her efforts, for among the boards which she had rescued from the kindling box were several of such dimensions and clearness that she knew would make the desired shelter and feeding station they were going to start upon that day.

This aggregation of odds and ends lay out near the granary, where the tools were kept when those that belonged on the farm could be located at once. Clarissa and Johnny ran

on ahead, not knowing just where their mother was going. Still they desired to show the intensity of their interest in the new undertaking.

Mrs. Wade purposely called them to her and hinted at other doings at which she had been employed during a part of the day. This maneuver misled the children until they were almost upon the accumulation of boards.

Clarissa was the first to discover the coveted materials. The mother had laid the hammer and a quantity of nails, with the best saw on the ranch, on top of a box alongside the granary. A decrepit sawhorse, the Bucephalus of carpentry, minus one leg and with another one that had been splinted with a piece of board held in place by baling wire, leaned disastrously far to one side, seemingly in anticipation of the great load it was soon to bear.

With a shout Clarissa grabbed the saw and the first board she could reach. She used the box for the second horse, and started to saw.

Johnny shouted in high glee. "Hey, yuh don't know how ter saw. Lemme take the ole cripple—I'll make her hum—yuh betch yer life I will!"

Clarissa refused to be shown anything about this work by a boy two years her junior and much smaller than she, so she shoved him away and said with great vehem-

ence: "Git a board o' yer own, Johnny Wade, an' let me alone—shan't he, ma?"

"Hold on, childern, afore yuh go any further. What air yuh goin' ter make?" interrupted their mother. "Hev yuh laid any plans which yuh want ter follow—hev yuh any drawin's er measurements ter go by?"

Both the children stared at her in amazement. The boy was the first to come to his senses. "Course she hain't, ma, fer she can't tell nothin' 'bout sich stuff 'thout a square er a three-foot rule. I guess I know! Didn't I help dad an' the men las' year when they built that ole shed out there?"

"Lots you done helpin' build that shed!" scornfully asserted his sister, who was stumped by her brother's accusation of unpreparedness.

"I've been thinkin' a lot 'bout makin' this here shelter today," suggested their mother, "an' I sort uv planned suthin' to look a little bit like what Jimmy Watson made over to 'Paradise.' While I was washin' here at home alone all day I made one up in my mind what I thought mebbe would look nice if we could make it."

Clarissa, Johnny and the other little ones gazed at their parent with great admiration. Johnny's eyes beamed upon her, for the boy was very fond of his mother because he could depend upon a square deal at her hands. She treated each child alike, so far as the others could see, for she had a real knack in directing them, yet they failed to

recognize her masterfulness. Johnny always acted as though he stood a little closer to her than any of his sisters and brothers did. I have noticed that the eldest boy in a family often acts that way!

"I didn't make no figures on a piece o' paper, as Jimmy an' his folks done, but I figured out a pretty nice piece o' garden or orchard furniture fer the birds today," volunteered Mrs. Wade, and she blushed quite becomingly as she admitted it. She was quite unused to taking the initiative in matters around the home, so her new honors hung strangely upon her.

"Can't yuh 'member, ma, how big that one was Jimmy made?" asked little Martha. "I thought 'twas 'bout so high," and the ten-year-old stretched her hand up as high as she could reach.

"Aw, 'twas taller'n that!" exclaimed Johnny. "Why, any ole cat on the place c'u'd jump right on top o' that thing. Don't yuh 'member, ma, fer 'twas only yistidday we saw 'em—'twas all dad c'u'd do ter reach up inside an' feel 'round a little bit?"

Clarissa happened to glance off up the road, and espied her father and the buckboard returning from town. "Here comes dad; he'll tell us all 'bout them air measurements." And off she ran at top speed, with Johnny and the other children trailing close behind her. They always enjoyed running up the road to meet the team coming from town!

“Hey, dad!” Clarissa called out as soon as she was close enough to make herself understood. “What was the size o’ that bird shelter we saw yisttaday at ‘Paradise’?”

“Jist wait ’till I git the hosses put up, gal, an’ I’ll turn in an’ help yuh all I kin ’till chore time,” promised the father. As he drove into the yard he called out: “Hello, Sally—all right?” and went on to the barn, a broad grin overspreading his face.

Mrs. Wade made no audible reply to her husband’s inquiry, but it gave her much joy as she smiled, waving her hand as well as that of their youngest boy at him as he disappeared around the corner of the barn.

I walked into the barn from the rear almost at the same instant the rancher led his horses into their stalls. I was on the last long lap of an all-day’s tramp, and my way took me past the Wade home. I had entered the ranch from the far desert side, where I had been exploring for the day. I wanted to secure first-hand information concerning the wild bird-life in that immediate vicinity, because I thought it might be of use to this family in their projected plans.

“Here’s our friend!” sang out Tom Wade as I appeared behind him. The children hailed me with delight because they thought I might be able to render them some assistance in putting their feeding shelter together. “We need a little coachin’, me an’

the folks," continued the rancher, "'bout these here fixin's we're plannin' on, an' I'll be danged 'f I don't b'lieve yuh kin help us."

Almost before their father had finished speaking Clarissa and Johnny exclaimed in the same breath: "How tall is that shelter o' Jimmy's? We can't 'member 'bout it."

I indicated the height with my hand held above my head. Before I was able to say a word Johnny broke in with: "There, Clarissy, I tole yuh how high 'twas—an' I was right, too, so I was!"

By this time I had greeted the mother and the other children standing interestedly around the heap of boards. Had there been hammers, saws and saw-horses for each one of the family, they would have been in use at that moment. All wanted to work at once. Johnny fought hard with his big sister for possession of the only saw on the ranch. Neither would yield to the other, so the father said, as they wrestled about the yard: "Hol' on there, yuh kids; ain't yuh 'shamed o' yerselves, scrappin' like that? Gi' me that saw—I'll do all the heavy work!"

A few rough measurements were made, the saw rushed mightily—and in a few minutes Mrs. Wade and the children began to assemble the pieces according to directions. Almost before I could believe it, the shelter was standing on its wobbly legs and the glory of accomplishment shone forth from every



pair of eyes on the job. The children danced around the apparatus and the mother smiled approvingly at her husband, who in turn winked his approbation to her.

"Won't yuh stay ter supper?" urged the parents, as I started off toward the big gate. But I was obliged to forego that pleasure because I desired to reach home before late at night. They thanked me graciously and asked me to return soon to aid them further in the work. I promised them that I would call often, and took my way over the sand-ridge toward "Paradise."

I stopped at Watson's just long enough to say "Hello!" to them and to tell them of the good work under way at the Wade ranch. They were much surprised at the real interest awakened in this family, and expressed the hope that it would continue indefinitely.

All of the Watsons agreed to keep in close touch with their most recent converts to conservation and to use every effort to aid them in all ways. I realized fully how much depended upon getting this ranch family started correctly. In making appliances for the wild birds mechanical errors are most costly, rather tending to drive these sensitive creatures away from one's home and farm unless every precaution be taken to make the particular article acceptable to their tastes.

I left "Paradise" with promises I knew never would be broken. I knew the cause was in the best hands in the county. I was

positive that much good would result, and that it would come quickly. On my way home I planned to visit both families soon and look over the work being attempted by the new conservationists.

## CHAPTER XV

Ah, what a warning for a thoughtless man,  
Could field or grove, could any spot on earth,  
Show to his eye an image of the pangs  
Which it hath witnessed; render back an echo  
Of sad steps by which it hath been trod!

—Wordsworth.

A few days after my visit to the Wade and Watson ranches I was out in another part of the township, close to the Watson home, and concluded to call upon them again. I was scarcely in the house at "Paradise" when Mrs. Watson said she had something to show me. She left me in a big armchair in their cozy sitting-room, before a blazing log fire in the roomy fireplace. It was not particularly cold, yet the October air had a sharp tingle in it that made a fire quite a necessity indoors.

It was Saturday, and the children were at home. When Mrs. Watson returned she brought her son Jimmy. She was smiling knowingly as they walked across the room toward me, but the boy's face wore quite a serious expression.

Addressing me, Mrs. Watson said: "Jimmy wants yuh to read a letter he got t'other day after yuh was out here."

The clean-looking young chap handed me the letter and sat down near me while I read it. He was not quite at ease, so I wondered what was in store for me. Surely, I thought, nothing could have gone wrong with any of his wild-life plans in the neighborhood, because I considered his work too well grounded even to think of failure.

My first glance at the envelope gave me an inspiration. The superscription was in an immature hand and considerably scrawled. I sensed the situation at a glance. Taking the letter from its cover, I read as follows:

Dear Friend Jimmy—All our fambly made a bird shelter an a feeding station yistidday. We done it after the one yuh made which we all think is very nice. Ourn wont look as good as yourn coz we didn't hev no sich nice boards to make it out, an we didn't hev no good saw an no measurements ter go by neither. Jist think on it will yuh Johnny is helping me every day when we git home from school, to make some things fer the birds. Ain't that jist lovely? An when we said we would make a bird box an put it up in a tree we started it an we didnt know how big er how small to make it. Ma said we had best ast you to give me some plans and an idee how big the hole is in the box fer the bird to go in at. I don't know where to put the hole neether is it near the bottom or by the roof. Ma said to tell yuh an yer folks we are all well an hope this will find

yuh the same as ever. Please tell us as soon as yuh git this letter so we kin make other things fer our friends the birds.

Respectfully your friend,

CLARISSA MARIE WADE.

"That is a fine letter, Jimmy," I said to him, "and I hope you answered it immediately, giving Clarissa the proper dimensions for the openings in the nesting boxes. You know the most important thing about such appliances for the birds is the entrance for their little bodies. They require a size that is but little larger than is necessary to admit them easily. Birds like the wrens, chickadees, tree swallows and martins will not occupy a nest home which has too large an entrance leading into it."

"Jimmy sent Clarissy a copy o' that gov'ment bulletin yuh give him, which tells all 'bout the sizes uv the doorways fer 'bout fifty birds," answered Mrs. Wade quickly.

The boy straightened up and said in self-defense: "I didn't hev ter send her that, fer I knowed all 'bout them sizes myself, but I thought the quicker she got what she wanted to know, the quicker she'd hev the house built, an' it being printed, she c'u'd read it better'n she c'u'd my writin'."

While we sat in comfortable chairs near the blazing fire I related what Tom Wade had told us about the surprise Clarissa gave to Johnny when she awakened him out of a sound sleep to show him the mourning dove.

I told them, also, what Johnny said he would do with the old shotgun as soon as he was dressed and downstairs.

Jimmy-the-Second was highly interested in the progress being made over on their friend's ranch, for he felt himself to be one to whom they looked for advice and direction. He was too deeply concerned in the effort being made to note anything but the most serious side of the question. All he desired to do was to indicate to them the correct way in which to do the work and impress upon them the necessity for following the outlines and measurements he had given them.

I went out into the orchard with the mother and her boy to make note of the patronage of their appliances by the birds, and found the remaining members of the family already in attendance.

Little Lucy came running up to me and said excitedly: "Oh, we jist saw what I think is a new bird 'round here!"

"What was it like, Lucy?" I asked her.

"'Twas jist a little bit bigger 'an a sparrow, I think, an' it had a longer tail. First I thought it was a sparrow, but it didn't act like one, an' when it flew quick outen the feedin' station the feathers on its head stood up like. An' there was a patch o' white on top uv its head an' then a streak o' black an' 'nother streak o' white. An' it had some white bars on its wings, too," she described in hurried breaths.



“That must have been a white-crowned sparrow,” I suggested. “It is frequently called the ‘Northern Nightingale’ because of its beautiful song in spring and during its mating season. He is a great friend to all who treat him kindly, and serves the rancher most dutifully in all seasons of the year. He secures great quantities of insects and weed-seeds on the ground, upon which he feeds almost entirely. Like many other birds that remain with us all the year, he will eat a great variety of food when driven to it. He is a cheery and companionable sort of a fellow and is a frequent visitor to all sorts of shelters and feeding stations that are set up for his accommodation. He loves the wintry blast, and will come right up to the windows of a home for food in the depth of winter, if anyone be kind to him.”

“We’ll sure treat him like a real friend, won’t we, Lucy?” spoke up the little girl’s father. “I think it’s the fust time I ever seen that kind uv a bird ’round here. I’ve been lookin’ over some o’ the books me an’ Jimmy an’ the rest o’ the folks read ’bout every night after supper, tryin’ ter learn more ’bout these little cold-toed fellers what fly ’round here so much in the winter.”

Jimmy-the-Second stood back a little from the group and thoughtfully observed: “I fin’ it’s easy to git ’quainted with a new bird near every day ’f I keep closet watch ’round the house an’ the yards an’ the fields. Sometimes I see strange birds here, but I guess

they're on their way south, er else 'fraid ter stop an' call on us fer fear o' being shot. Fer as soon as I try ter git near 'em, off they go like er shot. P'raps they don't know what a nice place 'Paradise' is fer 'em—I don't know."

"Never mind about the newcomer birds flying away from you, Jimmy. It takes some time to form an acquaintance with most species of birds," I suggested to him. "Such callers have not met the birds that know your family, so they have had no chance to become informed as to your likes and dislikes. Even though the birds be chance visitors, the more careful you are in your movements—not going hurriedly toward them, going so slow they can scarcely see you move—the more surely will you accomplish what you desire. The mere fact that you have put out feed and water for them, and that there are no skulking cats hereabouts, gives them confidence in you and your surroundings. Such news travels fast in birddom, Jimmy."

"Yuh bet there ain't no cats on this ranch!" emphatically exclaimed the father. "Yuh see, don't yuh, we've got a 'bull-strong an' a chicken-tight' fence all 'round the hull ranch, an' that keeps 'way stray an' bird-huntin' cats."

## CHAPTER XVI.

The dusky waters shudder as they shine,  
The russet leaves obstruct the straggling way  
Of oozy brooks, which no deep banks define,  
And the gaunt woods, in ragged, scant array,  
Wrap their old limbs with sombre ivy twine.

—Hartley Coleridge.

“I have always felt,” I responded in the same strain in which Jimmy’s mind seemed to be running, “that the birds tell each other about the safe places. I have no doubt but that these feathered creatures have methods of communication that correspond with ours, which they use as fluently as we express ourselves when we talk one with the other.

“Take the Wade ranch as an example. Surely no one would deny that every live bird in the country round about knows the conditions that have existed there for years. Each one tells the other that a burst of fire and hail of shot is the only greeting that comes to one over there.

“I believe just as strongly that the dear little mourning dove that sat warily in Tom Wade’s apple trees the other day—the dove that Clarissa showed to Johnny that morning before his eyes were open—had sensed the change of heart that had occurred on

their ranch. Something in the atmosphere told her that she might visit the old trees and the stack-yards and other places on a farm that so delight wild bird-life, for she would be safe from that time forward. What else but an unseen force could have influenced the little bird?"

Jimmy started to reply, but Lucy abruptly interjected: "That's jist what I think, too!"

Amanda Watson glanced admiringly at her little girl and said softly and so sweetly: "I know you're right, too, darling, fer sich feelin's are always carried to a animal or to a human bein' when yuh really feel 'em."

"Out of the keenly sensitive ether surrounding us always come the messages to us and to the wild folk," I suggested to the family, "that are cheery, truthful and full of love—if we be attuned to interpret the vibrations that are on their way to us. They are ours for the seeking."

We talked a little while longer about the objects of our common quest. All promised to lend every aid to the new conservationists over in the other corner of the township, and then I passed on toward the sunset for a night tramp among the silent places of the great desert.

About an hour before sundown I came upon Tom Wade slowly passing over the sandy dugway leading toward his home. He was returning from town, where he had been disposing of a load of grain. He set his brakes, stuck a stone under a rear wheel,

and called to his horses to back up a little and take a breathing spell.

We were out on the desert at a point where the greasewood thrives and the rabbit-brush grows luxuriantly. It was a sandy ridge of scant fertility, upon which little sagebrush grew. One or two jackrabbits scooted from beneath a clump of rabbit-brush and made their way into the silent places just as we greeted each other.

Wade motioned me to a seat upon a big flat rock beside him, with the remark: "Might jist 's well set down. The team's tired, fer they hauled a big load o' grain to town today."

We made ourselves as comfortable as possible, leaning back against an old greasewood stump, while Tom called out to me: "D'yuh look 'round fer rattlers?"

"It is a little late for our snake friends to be out sunning themselves, even on or near such a nice warm rock as this one," I replied. "Snakes do not care for these cool days and frosty nights."

"Dunno 'bout that!" exclaimed my friend as he studied the immediate surroundings very carefully. "Seems ter me I seen one one time, a big feller, an' 'twas later'n the fall 'n this, too."

While I praised his care of himself, a practice of many years' residence on or near the desert, I was in no humor to hear a rattlesnake story from Tom Wade that evening. I wanted to talk about a higher grade of



wild-life, one that was more beautiful to behold, one that sang a sweeter song than the "Zt-zt-zt--zzrr!" he was wont to hear, and one to be welcomed in any home in our land—the songbird!

At once I suggested to him that we might talk quietly, but we must not move, for I had seen some birds close by which I desired to observe more closely. I told him that sitting like a statue among the greasewood and rabbit-brush for a few moments was good training for him in his future studies of the birds.

He had seen the birds flitting from one bush to another as he came up the dugway, and was anxious to learn more about them.

"What kind o' birds be they? I want to know their name an' what they're good fer. I see 'em every fall near my line fences, jist on the aidge o' the desert over there. They don't seem to be a-doin' much 'cept fly 'round an' hev a good time. They give a little 'peep-peep-peep!' oncet in a while, an' that's all I ever heerd out uv 'em," he declared.

I had my field glass swung around my waist and was taking it out of its case when he made the above remarks. A few small sparrowy birds came to earth about fifty feet distant and began to pick around in the sand. "Just take my glass," I said to him, "and fix the focus for your eyes. Level the glass upon them, and tell me what they look like. Describe them as well as you can, be-



ginning with their size, color, shape, character of beak, and give me any particularly interesting characteristic you may note."

"Why, them's sparrers—English sparrers! No, they ain't nuther—but they look like 'em," said the rancher as he squinted through the big magnifiers. "Fust off, I thought they was them sparrers, but they're 'bout the same size. Well, I'll be danged if them glasses don't bring 'em right up to yuh!"

"Do they?" I answered, as he took the glasses away from his eyes. "I am glad you can see the birds so clearly."

Again he was looking hard at the little birds. "Well, I'll be—say, them bird's got little black horns, one on each side o' his head!" he cried out. "They ain't horns, nuther—jist little feathers a-stickin' out—that's all!"

"Any black on that fellow over there?" I asked.

"Yep! They's black on top o' his head an' a black spot on his breast, jist like er medderlark, an' a streak o' black each side o' his head," called out this new observer, " 'long side o' his face."

"Can you see any other color?" I gravely queried.

"Oh, he's kinder brown an' white an' yallerish on his breast. I've seen lots o' these fellers in the fall an' winter 'round here," whispered Tom Wade.

"I think that fellow is a desert horned

lark," I ventured. "He is one of our most numerous winter birds and lives almost entirely on weed-seeds during the cold season. In the spring and summer he eats quantities of insects as well. He frequents the stack yards and strawpiles, where he hopes to find a few kernels of wheat or other grain which the threshers have left for his gleaning. He eats such food when the ground is covered with snow and ice. He swarms over the desert and down into the valleys, on the meadows and along the roadways, and all over the fallow land, in company with several different species of sparrowy birds. He and his friends have a great time cleaning up the farm and desert lands."

This was a bit of information this farmer actually valued. Never before had it been given to him in exactly that form. He wished to talk longer, but his team wanted to go home, I was anxious to get away, and he had his chores to do before dark.

"I want ter take one more peep at a bird through them glasses some day an' see 'f I kin see 'em as good as I saw 'em today," called out the rancher as he climbed into his wagon.

"Any time I have the glass with me you are welcome to it," I replied, as I tramped on over the ridge.

## CHAPTER XVII.

I heard a bird sing  
In the dark of December;  
A magical thing  
And sweet to remember.  
"We are nearer the Spring  
Than we were in September."  
I heard a bird sing  
In the dark of December.

—Oliver Hereford.

My way took me straight into the rich, red-gold sunset of an Indian Summer day. Between me and the snow-capped skyline of the mountains lay miles of open desert leading up to the foothills, all bathed just then by a gently moving sea of deep violet-tinted atmosphere. In places where the hog-backs rose high and ridge-like, the golden brush swept them with delicate touch from end to end, leaving them softly illumined amid the darker surrounding coloration.

In the draws, that were garbed on their northern slopes with firs, balsams, quaking aspens and other trees, the shadows were so deep that I could scarcely discern their general contour. The deeper canyons and gorges gashing the morning face of this range were no longer visible. I knew the

snow lay in them, and that up toward their heads small areas of new ice coated the surfaces of the streams here and there with fairy-like roofs preparatory for the coming winter.

I had been in the hushed seclusion of these peaks and ridges a week or so before, and I knew just how everything looked with a clean, white mantle draping each feature so naturally. I had tramped over those rocky slants during the winter season as well, and now, as I faced that way and caught the refreshing fragrance of the desert borne to me by cool evening breezes, unwittingly I increased my pace and pressed eagerly forward.

Those desert regions had given me untold delight as I rambled over them each month of the year. To me they were not waste places, for I had found something of value in every nook and cranny I explored. It might have been simply the character of the sand composing the soil, or the here-and-there patch of verdure of one species or another that attracted me.

Rarely did I have any tangible locality in view when I made such tramps—that is, no special place to which I wished to go in a certain elapsed time. Rather was I bent upon an exploration of the hidden spots that are often of such inestimable value to me and which give me such great pleasure when I come upon them suddenly.

Seemingly an aimless wanderer, slowly go-

ing from one bunch of greasewood to another; to this growth of sagebrush or that bit of rabbit-brush, or to a scraggly bunch of shad-scale, with its fish-scale leaves so prominently put forth—always I found something to lure me on with an impelling urge.

Almost every stand of bunchgrass or other growth into which I peered, all eyes and ears, whispered to me some secret! In one lush bit of grass was carefully concealed the domed home of the field mouse, and four tiny occupants were left to keep house while mother and father scoured the sandy soil for food.

Only a few days old were they, yet I am sure these little fellows realized that I was a friend—not on killing bent!—and they suffered me to handle them as I would. Eyes that had not yet looked out upon this world were tightly sealed beneath closed lids, in obedience to the Law of Nature. Tiny mouths, as yet used for nothing but to suckle the mother's breast, showed that the quickly growing germs of teeth would soon be in evidence and ready for maturing as soon as age gave them opportunity.

Why did I not crush the life out of these helpless creatures, so-called farmer's pests? I have but one answer to such inquiries, and that is, They are God's creatures, products of the same thought effort as that which imaged the bird, the flower or the man—and they have the same right to thoughtful consideration as any of these others!

True, at some future time they become the

prey of birds, mammals or reptiles, as it was designed they should be, or else they live on to a ripe old age of usefulness in their plane of existence. Such seems to be the demand of Nature, and I have no right to interfere with its functioning!

I found that a desert sage thrasher had had its nest in one low-grown, scrubby bit of greasewood, for the bodies of three fledglings lay upon the ground beneath the nest—dead! Unable to survive, these worthy fighters for a place among us had to succumb to still stronger forces, still according to the Law. Their sweet song might have gladdened the hearts of the happy desert folk had they been permitted to go on to full feather.

Carefully concealed from the casual visitor's eyes hung still another bit of evidence of the survival of the fittest, 'way out in those silent areas. A butcher-bird had impaled a desert sparrow's remains on a sharp, jagged point, to await his return to finish the feast. A few feet distant were the partially consumed carcasses of several large grasshoppers likewise awaiting their killer's disposition of them.

An unwisely venturesome blowsnake, perhaps, had been seized by an owl or a western red-tail hawk (I do not know which, for I was not present at the slaughter) as he sought more productive fields for insects, mammals and smaller reptiles with which to replenish his cellar cupboard. Only a little



remained to tell the story of the raid!

A tiny tuft of rabbit's fur nailed my attention to a spot close beside a big strawberry bush, where I noticed a scuffle of unusual severity had occurred. Leading away from the place were the tracks, softly indenting the sand, of Massa Coyote that had dined sumptuously the night before on Br'er Rabbit.

Juncos, desert sparrows, horned larks, meadowlarks and other bird species sang twitteringly all around me this late afternoon, after I had said "Good night!" to Tom Wade back in the valley. Each seemed to vie with the other in his engaging manners as well as in his haste to secure the greatest amount of weed-seeds to prove to me his worth while I was on my tour of inspection.

In a way, such was my mission. Had I not told the Watsons and the Wades that I would gather facts regarding the relative worth of the bird-life around them, in particular concerning those feathered friends of the desert contiguous to their respective homes? Jimmy-the-Second had availed himself of much of this knowledge at former times, and now, through the influence of the Watson family, the Wades had been brought into the fold of conservation. This meant more facts must be prepared for the new family's assimilation.

I had been making memoranda for a few minutes, and was about to leave the comfortable rock upon which I had been sitting,

when I saw the figure of a man appearing above the tops of the sagebrush and greasewood a few hundred yards away. As I walked toward him I saw that it was a big boy who had seen me arise from the ground and was on his way to where I was, going slowly through the brush. In a moment I recognized Johnny Wade. Gun-Grabbing Johnny had the "ole shotgun" on his shoulder, while a couple of jackrabbits dangled from his belt.

"Hello, Johnny!" I called out to him as soon as I was within speaking distance. I feigned ignorance of gun or rabbits, which the young hunter was trying hurriedly to conceal.

"Hello!" he gasped weakly, and stood where he was. At first he appeared anxious to turn his back on me and run, but second thought made him bravely face the music, with head up and eyes glistening.

"I jist sneaked the ole gun from home to git a few jacks," he stammered. "I—I didn't kill nothin' else—hain't took a shot at nothin' 'cept three-four jacks, an' got them two—honest ter goodness I hain't!"

"That's all right, my boy. Did your father know you took the gun with you?" I asked him.

"No, he didn't!" admitted Johnny. "Yuh ain't goin' ter tell, air yuh?"

"Not I, Johnny. I left your father about an hour ago over on the ridge, so he must be home by this time," I declared.

“Gee! then I’ve got ter git a move on! S’long, an’ please don’t say nothin’, will yuh?” pleaded the hunter.

“You tell me all about it the next time I see you, will you, Johnny?” I called to him.

“All right!” he yelled, as he trotted away in the gathering dusk.

## CHAPTER XVIII

Fie upon thee, November! Thou dost ape  
The airs of thy young sister—thou hast stolen  
The witching smile of May to grace thy lip,  
And April's rare capricious loveliness  
Thou'rt trying to put on!

—Julia C. R. Dorr.

A few days following my encounter with Gun-Grabbing Johnny out on the desert, I was going down street in town. When I was about midway the block I heard someone call my name in a quick, eager yell, seemingly from the other side of the street. I turned and saw Tom Wade, and Mrs. Wade was sitting beside him in their old buckboard in front of one of the stores. The wife was holding their three-year-old on her lap, and all waved their hands at me.

The rancher beckoned me to join them. Almost before I was near enough to hear them he sang out: "Say, did yuh meet our Johnny t'other day out on the desert, sou'west o' our place?"

"Yes," I acknowledged.

"What did yuh say ter him?" questioned the mother. "He come home all broke up 'bout somethin', an' when I ast him what was the matter, he said he'd seen you a few miles out on the desert——"

"Oh, he come through all right, all right —Johnny did!" interrupted the farmer laughingly. Then he turned to his wife and said apologetically "'Scuse me, Sally, fer buttin' in. I jist wanted him ter know we was on."

"What do you mean, Wade?" I demanded.

"Why," replied Mrs. Wade, "Johnny ran most of the way home, an' I guess he was so upsot he forgot all 'bout havin' the ole gun in his han' an' them jacks over his shoulder until he saw us out in the barnyard puttin' up the team."

"I had jist asked Sally where was Johnny, when he come a-runnin' in ther gate all winded like," chuckled the father.

"I wonder what ailed the boy!" I mused. "I saw what he had, and only a few words passed between us. Suddenly he said he must hurry on home, and away he went."

"He tole us all 'bout it, an' he feered yuh'd think he'd been killin' the birds out there with the ole gun. That's why he couldn't keep it from us. He didn't want yuh to think he'd lied 'bout not shootin' at nothin' but jacks," argued Wade, with a keen appreciation of the boy's attitude.

"Is Johnny in town with you today?" I questioned.

"There he comes out o' the store now!" whispered the mother anxiously, "an' don't let on we've been talkin' 'bout him, please. He might not like it. I jist want ter see how he acts when he sees you."

The boy came on a jump to the waiting wagon. He did not see me until he was settled on the back seat with his bundles. I happened to be standing on the near side of the horses, talking to his parents, when he sat down. He looked up and smiled sheepishly. I went around to his side of the wagon, and as I shook hands with him very ceremoniously I asked him what he had in his packages. Without answering my question, he extended his hand and stammered: "I—I didn't 'spect ter see you!"

"And I had no thought of meeting you today, Johnny," I replied. "But I am glad now that I walked downtown——"

"'Scuse me, but I'm glad ter meet yuh right here 'fore ma and pa, coz I didn't want yuh ter think I'd shot any birds t'other day," asserted the manly little fellow. "I know I snuk out with the ole gun fer a tramp an' ter see 'f I c'u'd git a shot at a jack er two, an' I didn't ast ma fer the gun. But I ain't goin' ter do it ag'in—yuh bet yer life I ain't!"

The mother gazed admiringly upon her eldest son. Unconsciously the boy had turned to her, his very best backing in the world, to have her give silent endorsement to his resolution. At once she read his thoughts, but could not remain mute to his appeal, so she proudly acknowledged his state of mind by saying: "I'm sure my boy will never go out ag'in without tellin' mother 'bout it. Another thing—he don't like what you call him.



He heerd from one uv the neighbor boys that yuh called him 'Gun-Grabbin' Johnny,' an' it hurt him awful. He's made up his mind that it ain't no fun any more ter shoot inner-cent birds er any other live thing—my boy has!"

"I beg your pardon, Johnny," I offered, as I accosted the diffident boy. "I used that expression because it appeared to signify about what I thought your feelings were whenever you saw a live wild thing come around the place. Now, isn't it true that you yelled for 'the ole gun' every time a song-bird or a hawk or a quail flew over the ranch? Didn't you want to take a shot at every gopher or every snake or any other creature anywhere near?"

"Yes, sir, 'tis!" affirmed the youngster with decision. "An' I thought I had er right ter do it, too. But somehows now I feel diffrunt 'bout them air thin's. What got my goat was the way them birds comes 'round the Watson ranch, an' now I see the diffrunce. O' course, maybe I got the right ter do it 'f I want ter, but I'm willin' ter quit when I'm showed!"

Tom Wade was eyeing his son intently as he enthusiastically offered: "Johnny's like his dad. He had to be showed, an' then, when he was, he come through all right. Ain't yuh, son? An' then Clarissy an' Marthy 've made sev'ral o' them bird boxes, an' stuck 'em up in the trees at diffrrunt places on the ranch. Seems ter me that sort o' took

the hankerin' arter guns an' that sort o' thing outen the boy's mind, specially sence we seen a big woodpecker 'round the stack-yards an' heerd him a-drummin' like all git out!"

"An' he went over to that ole tree behin' the barn an' commenced ter pick 'round fer worms; an' I seen him pull two-three big fat bugs right outen the bark. Yes, sir, I did!" boasted Johnny.

"That's the reason we call him a woodpecker, my boy—because he pecks in the wood for worms and eggs and millers and ants, and all such insects," I suggested to him. "It seems to me to be much nicer to see and to hear the birds around, whether they sing or not, than it is to have your trees and garden full of caterpillars of one kind or another. Isn't it, Mrs. Wade?"

"Yes indeed 'tis," she responded heartily. "It does seem so good ter hev a few o' them kind o' fr'ends 'round ag'in. I never felt quite right 'bout Tom wantin' ter kill everythin' what flew. When I wanted Johnny er his pa ter shoot a hawk er a owl it was jist ter save the chickens I was thinkin' 'bout. But sence I've learnt what them birds is good fer, in the las' few months, there'll be no more killin' of wild thin's on Tom Wade's ranch. Will there, Johnny?"

"No, ma'am, there won't!" declared the boy seriously as he looked at his mother in all sincerity.

I was positive that question was settled forever in that family, so I turned to pass on down the street. I had gone but a few paces when the rancher called out: "Hey, there! Hol' on! I near fergot ter tell yuh what we-all wanted. On Thanksgivin' Day we're goin' ter hev the hull fambly from 'Par'dise' over to our place fer dinner, an' I plum' fergot ter ast yuh ter come over. Can yuh come? We'll eat 'long 'bout two o'clock, won't we, Sally?"

"Yes, Tom, I think me an' Clarissy kin git ready 'long 'bout that time. Ef we ain't quite on time it won't make much diffrence s' long 's we hev lots ter eat," replied Mrs. Wade.

"Thank you. I shall be honored to eat a genuine Thanksgiving Day dinner with such good friends of the birds," I acknowledged.

"Yuh know 'Jimmy-the-Second,' they all call him, 's goin' ter come ter our house nex' week an' show my wife an' Clarissy some new wrinkles," laughed the farmer. "Them three think they've got all the knowledge on the subjeck o' the birds corralled—so they do!"

"Now, Tom," replied his wife to this bit of raillery, "that ain't so. Yuh know yer jist 's interested as anyone at home. Don't yuh want us ter do jist 's much as we kin ter make the farm look nice an' hev lots o' hay an' grain an' all the fruit we want?"



FIG. 13. California Seagulls at Hat Island Rookery, Great Salt Lake, Utah.



FIG. 14. Nest of Marsh-Hawk, One Egg "Pipped."



FIG. 15. A Wild Western Willett Being Lifted Off Her Nest.

“Course I do, Sally! An’ I’ll help yuh all I kin—yuh bet I will!” happily admitted the rancher. “I was jist a-foolin’!”

I laughed with Tom Wade at his wife’s seriousness as I went on, calling out to them: “Good-bye, all of you!”



## CHAPTER XIX

Divine Nature gave the fields; human art  
built the cities.—Varro.

Scarcely a week after my visit with the Wades on the street in town, the postman brought me the following letter:

“Paradise,” November —, 19—.

Dear friend: I sure am up against it this time. I didnt know there was many birds around here what I didn't know but one day when I went out to the feeding shelter I seen a bird what looked like a new bird to me. It was my week taking care of the feed and water and he was smaller than a English sparrow and was awful dirty and I think I seen he was yellow too. His tail was a little forked and seems to me he was a shedding his yellow feathers and he had some black on his head. What bird is it? Lucy sticks to it hes a wild canary but there aint no such birds is there? Them birds what they call canaries is gold-finches aint they? Please tell me his name and all of us is going over to Wades for Thanksgiving day dinner and I wish you was going to be there too.

Your friend for the birds,  
JAMES WATSON THE SECOND.

I made no answer to Jimmy's letter by mail. For some time I had been planning a trip that promised to be one of unusual worth to me. The end of Autumn was near, although the weather was exceptionally fine, and I wanted to get away and back home before Thanksgiving Day.

There were some ranch friends living about one hundred and fifty miles distant, in a far part of the State, with whom I wished to spend a couple of days. I could reach a train up their valley by making a twenty-mile hike across the hills and desert, stopping on my way at "Paradise." It would make a long day's journey—one that required a very early start if I hoped to reach their home by evening of the day on which I set out.

For a long twelvemonth I had been evolving plans for an exceptional celebration for Thanksgiving Day, but I had not expected they could be or would be consummated at the Wade home. The invitation to the Watson family and myself relieved me. This wholesome thoughtfulness on the part of Tom Wade and his wife gave me the one opportunity I had been seeking to have these two families get together, without making my wishes known in the matter.

I changed the date of my departure for the ranch of my friends, starting a day earlier, so I could spend a part of Saturday as well as Saturday night at "Paradise." This

gave me ample time to accomplish my mission.

A greater part of that Saturday was consumed in reaching the Watson home, because of the many interesting features encountered on my way thither. Bird tracks in the sand, animal footprints here and there, are telltale evidences of the coming and going of God's creatures, each solving his own problems according to his wisdom and unconsciously furnishing splendid premises upon which to base his pursuit and possible capture by enemies about which he cared little so long as he was able to secure his food and visit with his kind, as his ancestors had done before him.

The friends at "Paradise" were where I expected to find them on a Saturday afternoon—taking stock of the winter needs of their bird allies out in the fields and orchards.

James Watson was a wise husbandman. He finished his farm work early each Autumn and had everything ready for Winter, and whether the season were an open or a severe one, he and his stock were prepared for any and all emergencies. When there were no supplies to be hauled out from town on Saturday, he turned much of the day into a play season, with all members of his family participating happily. Nothing at "Paradise" was too old, too big or too fat to be refreshed by hours and days of play and out-of-door enjoyment.

His girls and boys revelled in delightful occupations every day of the week, but when Saturday came—well, that was different! No school to attend; only a few chores to do; visiting friends to entertain by showing the beauties of “Paradise”—the rearrangement, repairs and cleaning of bird shelters and feeding stations, with many other play-work pastimes in which to engage, this family spent a great day in the open!

No weather delayed these operations for their adopted friends of many species. Rain or snow, everything went forward with unmeasured kindness and with a determination for building up instead of tearing down, which aroused an unheard-of enthusiasm in the heart of each member of the family.

“Play on a farm! Whoever heerd uv sich a thing?” exclaimed a far-away neighbor of Jim Watson’s. “It’s all I kin do to git my work done—yes, my every-day work on the place, ’thout spendin’ my time in tomfoolery o’ one kind er ’nother!”

I smiled good-naturedly at what I thought was his lack of wisdom, as I replied: “It doesn’t take much to interest some people, does it, Mr. Robinson?”

“No, it don’t; an’ I want ter tell yuh right now that good old-fashioned work’s good ’nuff fer me!” answered this laborer in one of earth’s vineyards, who saw only the fruit of the vines (money!) and gave no heed to its origin, its protectors, its producer or its co-operative worth.

Yet the children at "Paradise" were normal, healthy girls and boys, ever ready for organized, constructive effort of any sort. Their parents apparently had been reared much the same way, although they lacked similar foundations upon which the children had built; their opportunities had been as great, but they had failed to take advantage of them.

How they did play that day as I came upon them, busy in their different employments! I could see them from a distance. I could hear their joyous shouts of laughter, and I was able to judge their devotion to ranch life in its every particular. What could give to any group of children of any age better fundamentals than just such surroundings—when properly and wisely utilized? Amanda and James Watson were not only advocates of such a course of living, but they carried out every detail of such a life with deep devotion to its perfect accomplishment.

At some time this mother and father, with their eldest son Jimmy, had been tutored that the soil and all that came from it was sacred! Someone who had had a great influence upon them earlier in life would be glad to know how productive his sowing had been. Whoever he was, he had taught that Nature-Study was the keystone of agriculture. This same teacher—Director, I prefer to name this individual—believed wholly in the oneness of the universe! He must have said to them that it was the continuous co-operation with

every natural law which gave man his unbounded happiness in all doing—or the opposite, great misery, whenever he transgressed those simple, immutable principles.

Since my first peep at “Paradise” and its dwellers in that arm of the desert valley this question had popped into my mind more than once: “Where did these people get their beginnings?”

The tale of Jim Watson’s awakening at the hands of his wife had not been forgotten. Amanda Watson’s Director in her girlhood was still in mind, but from what source had Jimmy-the-Second gained his first touch of this all-pervading Presence from whose influence he had never been removed? The grasp of the boy Jimmy was beyond my ken. Without cessation this question had arisen for my solution, but as yet I had none in sight. Yet I felt some day a clue would be dropped unconsciously—and then my riddle would be solved.



## CHAPTER XX

Under the snowdrifts the blossoms are sleeping,  
Dreaming their dreams of sunshine and June;  
Down in the hush of their quiet they're keeping  
Trills from the throstle's wild summer-time tune.

—Harriet Prescott Spofford.

As I passed through the big road-gate on my way into the outer yard of "Paradise" I caught a glimpse of the entire family out in the orchard, intently occupied in the inspection of one of their bird shelters. I went toward them as quietly as possible, keeping trees between myself and the birds they were studying, until I was near the group.

There was an unwritten law at "Paradise" that whenever any member was making observations of wild-life neither movements nor noise would be tolerated—no matter what its source. Even the farm collie had become developed to the point of squatting where he stood when he saw anyone peering studiously in any direction. He appeared to be anxious to enter into a like occupation, and held his pose as long as the observer maintained a fixed position in sight.

I had left my pack at the house. My field glass had been in my hand much of the time during the day, and now I brought it to my

eyes—when snap! went a weed-stalk underneath my feet—but not a person broke his stand. I gazed at the birds all were studying.

Mother's opera-glass and a big telescope had been requisitioned for this occasion, while several pairs of young eyes keenly sought to identify some bird. From the manner in which all behaved I was sure some newcomer had found sanctuary with them.

I was standing close to little Lucy when I made my presence known. She slowly placed her lips to my ear and whispered excitedly: "I think it's nothin' but a goldfinch what's got mixed up with them other birds—don't you?"

"Which one do you mean, Lucy?" I asked her.

"The one jist inside the north wall, by the window o' the shelter," she responded.

At that instant the bird indicated flew out and came to rest on a twig about fifty feet from us. As he made his departure he voiced but one note, when I recognized him. He flew in wavy undulations and he was a soiled yellow, as Jimmy had said. All turned about to see what had made the noise a minute before, and all eyes questioned "What bird was that?"

"Lucy named the little fellow a moment ago in my ear," I told them.

"There, Jimmy, 'twas a goldfinch, so there, now! I guess I know that way o' flyin', don't I?" she appealed to me.

"Surely you did this time," I replied admiringly.

"I read somewheres oncet," quickly added Lucy, "that them goldfinches fly 'round with big flocks o' other small birds, an' go all over the country feedin' an' havin' a good time in the fall an' winter. An' I got a good look at this feller yistiddy, closer 'n we was today, an' I seen he was jist a little yaller bird an' he was a-changin' his coat!"

I looked at Jimmy and said: "What is that big word we use when we are talking about birds that flock together in the autumn and winter? It is a long one and a hard one, too, and maybe you do not recall it."

"Oh, I know!" sang out the brother next in age. "An' it's om-om-ominous!—that's what it is, an' it means a bird what eats anythin' an'——"

"Naw, 'tain't nuther—that ain't the word!" disgustedly interjected Jimmy, the bird-boy. "It's a harder word nor that. It don't sound like that—does it, pa?"

The father smiled unaffectedly as he replied: "Don't ast me, Jimmy. I can't remember it!"

"It commences with 'g' an' it's——" And Lucy stopped abruptly.

Dear little girl! She was sure she had that nasty tongue-twister of a word right where it belonged—where it could twist her tongue; but the word refused to be said, much to her chagrin.

"I guess we'll hev to ast our friend here what that word is," suggested Mrs. Watson.

So I explained to Lucy and Jimmy—for they were the "warmest" in guessing—that the word meant running together in large flocks. "It does begin with 'g,' Lucy," I said to that keen-witted maiden, "and the next letter is 'r,' and then comes 'e,' spelling the syllable 'gre'——"

"Aw, now I know what 'tis!" yelled Jimmy triumphantly. "It's 'gregarious'—that's what 'tis!"

"Good boy, Jimmy," I called out to him. "You may go to the head of the class."

The boy was a real "pinch-hitter." Much that he knew about birds came from books, in which he had delved deeply, so far as the scientific part was concerned. It is true that his mother had taught him all she knew of the practical end of the work, and his father had aided him greatly along the same lines. Yet, with all this educational effort, his acquisition of a biologic vocabulary was very slow.

If Jimmy had come across the word 'gregarious' in a book he could not have pronounced it, let alone telling what the word meant. This made me wonder frequently where he had heard this word and others he was in the habit of using occasionally. He must have made their acquaintance at an early age. Someone must have used such words in his hearing, and they must have talked to him about them intelligently, thus

making them his friends. He learned to know them as he would have known a pet dog, a steer or a lamb—by constant association with them.

“Now that Jimmy was able to recall the word which means flocking together,” I observed, turning to the second son, “what was that hard one you were trying to say a few minutes ago?”

The expression on Jimmy’s face told me instantly that he knew the word, but because he wanted to give his brother a chance to answer me, if he could do so, he was manly enough not to speak. I waited for a few seconds, when Lucy said thoughtfully: “I used to know that word, too—but I guess I can’t ’member it no more.”

The younger boy was becoming more and more confused because he could not say the word, so I said to him: “Never mind, my boy. Jimmy didn’t know about all of these things until he had read and studied hard and long, did you, Jimmy?”

“No, sir, I didn’t—but that air word’s ‘omnivorous,’ ain’t it?” he smilingly answered me.

“Yes,” I replied to him, “that is the correct word. But what does it mean?”

“To eat anythin’ yuh kin git hold uv!” exclaimed Lucy enthusiastically, before Jimmy could say a word.

“That’s a good definition, Lucy,” I admitted laughingly, “and it is particularly applicable to birds in the winter time. Espe-

cially may it be said of those birds that stay throughout the year with us in the northern countries—those which do not migrate. When snow and ice cover nearly all of the available natural food for these birds, they are driven to attempt anything that looks good to eat. Quails, for instance, get practically all of their food from the ground, in the form of insect life. But in the cold countries, when snow conceals the earth, unless these greatly beneficial creatures have access to stack-yards, strawstacks or other materials which furnish them with weed-seeds and grains of some sort, either the ranchers must feed them or they will perish. Some farmers are wise enough to realize the great worth of such indefatigable insect destroyers, and provide winter feeding and drinking devices for their use.

“When ranchers and others fail to manifest any interest in the helpfulness of quails, meadowlarks and blackbirds, for instance, and make no provision for their feeding, the birds make every effort to keep from starving. They try everything edible, just the same as any of us would do under similar conditions. Many times I have seen these birds sitting off the ground, on slender, swaying weed-twigs, perches that seemed scarcely strong enough to bear the weight of a hummingbird, eagerly pecking weed-seed pods of various kinds, just to satisfy their hunger on the hard life-cells of the future plant.

“I have stood many times within thirty



to fifty feet of our mountain quail, and much closer to the eastern bob-white, as a witness of the hard times these birds have to secure a bit of food."

"If they couldn't git weed-seeds, what would they do then?" queried the child Lucy.

## CHAPTER XXI

All-cheering Plenty, with her flowing horn,  
Led yellow Autumn, wreath'd with nodding corn.

—Burns.

“They go right among the farmer’s poultry, on some ranches,” I replied, “and when the men and boys scatter grain for the chickens, the quails flutter anxiously around the outer borders of the flock and pick up a few of those pieces of concentrated nourishment. Always they act as though they expected a blow or a gunshot in payment for their temerity, and often, I am sorry to say, they get what they are looking for.

“Thoughtless men and boys take such opportunities to accustom the quails to the presence of human beings close to them, and then they are slaughtered by the wholesale. Trusting the hand that offers them plenty, they endeavor to get nearer to the base of supplies, when the unsuspected attack is made. In that trusted hand often is concealed a murderous gun!

“One winter, two or three years ago, while tramping out toward the Great Salt Lake, in the midst of some swamps that are along its shore, near the mouth of the River Jordan, I found a number of dead wild snow geese.

I sat down beside one and inspected its crop and gullet. I was amazed when I observed to what extremities these wild things will go in search of food. The gullet and crop of each one was filled—stuffed, if you please—with dead salt-grass!”

“I thought all sorts o’ geese lived on grass,” ventured Jimmy.

“Geese are greedy grazers when the grass is green and luscious, but after it has been frostbitten, when it has become dry hay, fit only for food for horses and cattle, it cannot be digested by wild birds. Whether it has been killed by frosts or dried up as the natural consequences of the approach of winter, the time for plant rest in this latitude, it matters little. Geese have no teeth with which to chew such substances, so these fine, big fellows starved to death with their crops and gullets filled with food they could not utilize.”

“But why didn’t them wild geese go south, where it’s warm fer ’em an’ where they kin git lots to eat?” asked the younger brother.

“Because,” I answered, “many of these swamps in the valley of the Great Salt Lake are fed by warm alkali waters which rarely freeze over. Many open places remain all winter, and in them geese, ducks, coots and grebes find plenty of food for the cold months. Sometimes soft snow falls to considerable depth and fills such open areas of water with thick slush, and the wild folks’ food is covered up. All available green



FIG. 16. The Seagull Monument, Mormon Temple Grounds, Salt Lake City. Unveiled Oct. 1, 1913.



FIG. 17. Nest of Long-Billed Curlew; Two more eggs complete the "Clutch."

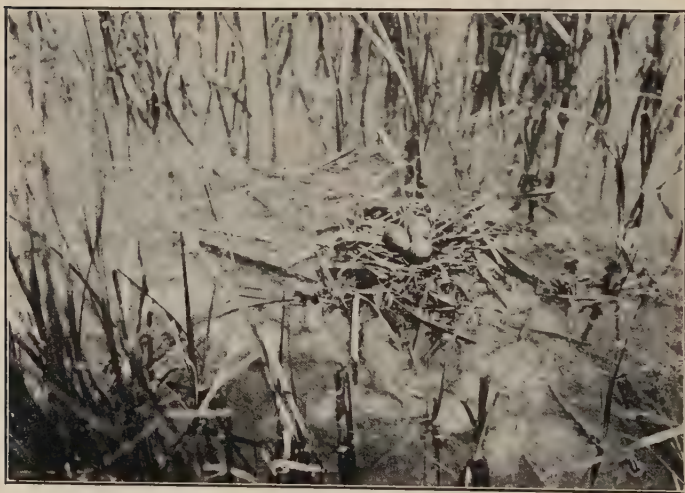


FIG. 18. Nest of Black Tern, Floating Lightly Upon the Water.



growth is away down under this blanket, and it remains there until the warming influence of the sun melts the cold cover."

"I should think they'd git away before a big lot o' snow comes on 'em," suggested Jimmy.

"It is marvelous, Jimmy," I continued, "what wonderful weather interpreters all wild creatures are. They know how and when to shield themselves under ordinary circumstances, but there come occasions when they are caught unexpectedly, and suffer greatly thereby. All birds, particularly those that remain north during the winter, endure great hardships when sudden and severe changes in the weather come upon them. Such weather-flops bury food of all kinds—and then it is that many species make their appeal to mankind. Wild water fowl rarely trust man sufficiently to feed from his stores of provisions.

"Such birds stand around slush-filled water holes or fly from one point to another, seeking food, until they are so weakened by their efforts that they are unable to undertake a migratory flight. Plenty might be but a hundred miles distant, yet they cannot figure out its existence, because they are urged by their instincts to remain by water which, in the cold months, is their only salvation. To be sure, they must have a certain amount of food to remain normal, but they cannot go long without water."



“When yuh opened them air snow geese wa’n’t there nothin’ but dried salt-grass in their craws?” queried Jim Watson.

“Not a thing,” I answered. “When these organs become so engorged with such materials, even though corn and wheat lay about them in plenty, they would starve to death just the same. In this crammed state they are physically unable to rid themselves of the matted accumulations which take up the space usually utilized by valuable food products.”

“Don’t they never make no feedin’ shelters like ourn fer ducks an’ geese?” murmured Lucy.

“None like these you have here, Lucy,” I answered. “There are a few wild game sanctuaries in the United States that were established in natural feeding grounds to afford protection to all water fowl. These extensive areas are safeguarded by federal and state laws, and they are patrolled by game wardens who have a great love for wild folk, and who do everything in their power always to protect their wards from harm.

“A few commercial dealers in wild game birds have small, enclosed areas, slightly heated for cold, snowy days, and these birds are used for breeding purposes only. Such places one could not call sanctuaries.

“There are a number of extensive domains in this country, devoted to the saving of

wild-life, which are owned by wealthy individuals who set aside funds to be used annually for such protection. On these estates are large ponds or lakes, wherein accumulate thousands upon thousands of geese, ducks, brants, swans and many other species of wild water fowl, both in the spring and autumn migrations.

“I know of one man who used to be a great hunter of wild Canada geese—‘honkers,’ they are called. He lived in Ohio for many years. From his own pen I read that he had slaughtered many thousands of wild geese in his shooting days. The time came when wild geese no longer visited his Ohio home. He had been instrumental in riding the country thereabouts of this wild game bird. He was a maker of bricks, and he modeled in clay, and was in every way an artistic workman. Still clinging to his clay deposit on the farm, he was loath to give up his shooting excursions twice annually, so he sought far-away spots where he could indulge himself to the limit. Finally he discovered he must give up his clay deposits and follow the birds into other haunts, or else let them go their own sweet way.

“His overwhelming desire to kill caused him to decide in favor of the geese; the die was cast. He sought locations up in Canada, north of Lake Ontario, and he journeyed thither. He cared nothing about giving up a good farm in Ohio, with valuable clay de-

posits upon it. It appeared, he said, that he was being urged by his old killing instinct to seek another home where he might satiate himself. He found the spot his heart sought, bought a large acreage, where he could make bricks, model, and hunt as much as he liked. It was a wild, well-watered country, and he settled upon it, happy in the thought that here he could kill geese the balance of his days!

“One day he had a vision of what might be gained if he sought to conserve the wild geese and their feathered friends, instead of gun-slaughtering them. That invisible other self slipped upon him unawares, and made the suggestion to him—and, behold! he had not gone so far away from this ‘better self’ that he failed to listen!

“On his farm were large ponds, around and upon which he expected to do his shooting. Bullrushes and cattails grew in luxuriant abundance in those waters. Wild celery, rice and pickerel-weed everywhere spread their lush foliage to the welcoming embrace of the waters on his land.

“He added to the attractiveness of his acres and the juicy foods they produced for his wild-life friends by scattering loads of shelled corn on the ground in their favorite haunts. He did this while they were southward bound, escaping the waterless and foodless days up north, as well as when they again took up their flights into the north-land to breed in the spring. These wary

creatures settled upon this man's land twice annually for a month or six weeks. Here they had the time of their short, hunted lives—yet there possessed him no desire to kill them!”

## CHAPTER XXII

Those old days when the balancing of a yellow butterfly o'er a thistle bloom  
Was spiritual food and lodging for the whole afternoon. —Lowell.

“The thirst for the blood of game birds seemed to have been satiated! Almost before he realized what was going on, the birds had adopted him as their friend, allowing him to sit or stand quite near to them. They even ate out of the hand that once had drawn a deadly bead upon them or their ancestors for the purpose of killing!

“During the days and weeks of one long, long spring and summer time, while these migratory friends were away in the far north hurrying eager, greedy fledglings into full feather, just to take them down into southern Canada to be introduced to this man and his horn of plenty, this farmer-artist banked up the big ponds in which his birds loved so much to paddle and play, and built a stable cement wall around each of them. Several acres in extent were thus given over to the water fowl friends in three different places, yet quite near to each other, devoted exclusively to their bathing, feeding and playing,

sanctuaried finally in perfect peace from man and his dread guns.

"In arranging the retaining walls around these bodies of water he aimed not to disturb the natural plant and soil features that had hitherto dominated these locations. He knew all too well how deadly like the foliage surroundings were his rush and cattail 'blinds' from which he used to slaughter so many birds, and he knew their wariness, their suspicious consideration of man; so he built accordingly. He was careful to do nothing that might drive these game creatures from their new-found sanctuary.

"The first winged contingent from far northern waters dropped into their old haven during the night. They came to refuge with a slight flurry of snow, rather more sleety in character than real snow, and they had come a long way. Their friend had been expecting them for days, for he had feed in plenty out among the sedges and bullrushes, just in their favorite haunts when they sought refuge each autumn and spring, knowing how wild and shy they would be when they saw him come among them for the first time.

"A goose hunter studies the habits of his prey. He arose early that cold morning, and standing within his house, where he had a good view of two of the ponds, he saw no birds on the water. He unslung a big field glass and swept the third body of water quickly. Neither ducks nor geese in sight—



and he wondered. He dressed hurriedly and went slowly toward the pond nearest the house. Instantly a few dozen ducks shot into the air, as scared as they would have been had he been armed.

"They had been under cover of the rushes, feeding upon some of his shelled corn. 'Must have been a lot of young ones,' he said out loud, 'and they hain't got acquainted with me yet.' He went a little farther, and several other flocks went off squawking loudly. This occurred every time he appeared in sight for two or three days—until, in fact, great numbers of old ducks and geese, former visitors, had settled in the ponds nearest his buildings. These old birds walked off a little at first, and honked a quiet note of greeting to him, thus letting the young fellows know that this man was their friend.

"These peace-sounding honks seemed to settle his standing among them once more. But it took a week or more for all the birds to accustom themselves to the new retaining walls. They were not used to tumbling over a low cement wall to reach the water; instincts of many years' duration had taught them to walk sedately into the mud and rushes without intervention! It appeared that they recognized the man-made contraption, and they were timid about approaching it and walking over it.

"This timidity finally wore off, and literally thousands of geese and ducks partook of his hospitality in the new surroundings, stay-

ing until the nipping Canadian cold froze portions of the ponds. Then something said to them: 'Better move on south or you'll be caught where you can't get food and water.' And they were gone!

"While they stayed each spring and autumn this man fed them hundreds of bushels of shelled corn, preparing them for their journeys both ways, sending them on to new growth and happiness.

"So ideally carried out were his plans and so ideally did his wild friends respond to his kindness that wounded ducks, geese, swans and other hunted birds flew straight to his ponds for sanctuary. When severely wounded, as some of them were, they permitted him to feed them and furnish them protecting shelter until they were able to care for themselves."

"Isn't that wonderful, children?" very quietly spoke Mrs. Watson.

"I wish we had some big ponds 'round here, so we could do something for that kind o' hunted birds," murmured Lucy.

While I was relating the story of the conversion of this one-time hunter to the cause of saving rather than killing wild game birds, Jimmy Watson was listening very intently and apparently in deep thought.

"Did you ever tell Johnny Wade and his father about that feller?" asked Jimmy. "Him an' his folks orter hear 'bout him. I think it would do 'em a lot o' good."

"There is plenty of time to tell them about

these and other things, Jimmy," I said to the boy, "but we must not hurry them too much. It is best to increase the burden as they are able to bear it."

In this way we passed the remainder of that Saturday afternoon. Not until chore-time came did we leave the favored haunts of the wild birds at "Paradise," and then it was only to make the domestic creatures belonging on the place comfortable in sheds, stables and barns.

Supper was just at nightfall. Unknown to me, the family had planned an unusual entertainment for me. There was a suppressed titter here and there among the children. An air of excitement pervaded all quarters. Each one appeared to be particularly anxious to finish eating his supper. I wondered what was going to happen, when the parents arose from the table and said it was about time to go out, and that each one better put some warm wrap about his shoulders.

I passed out into the early night with them. I was warned by Lucy: "Keep very quiet, please!" Then we went to a secluded place within the shelter of a haystack and sat down carefully and without noise. Each one partly covered himself with hay and clothing in harmony with the general coloration surrounding us, in order that we might make no unusual additions to our immediate environment.

As Lucy clung to my arm she said: "We're goin' to watch a pair o' old owls

catch their supper—maybe. Won't that be fun?"

"Fun for the owls!" I responded. "But how about the rats and the mice that get caught?"

"I guess I don't know about them," she said. "I think I never was a mouse!"

Darkness came upon us more quietly than came the owls, yet we did not hear the birds! From a distance off toward the barn came a faint "Whoo—ooh!" The child Lucy cuddled close against me as the old bird voiced its dread call, shuddered, and tried to get still nearer to me. A reassured pressure of my hand calmed her, although she was not afraid; she was doing exactly what the majority of persons would have done.

We saw a winged shadow pass between us and the house. Right in the wake of Mother Owl came her mate; then a third and a fourth, so silently that no one of us heard the swish of a wing! They came forth as softly winged as a moonbeam.

While we sat there awaiting the coming of bird or game, we heard a slight rustle in the hay but a few feet away. We could see nothing, yet we knew it must be a mouse venturing out for food, or possibly he was on his way to make a neighborly call—either one of which would take him without the pale of the sheltering hay.

Mr. Barn Owl was a wise old prowler, and he knew Mr. Mousie's habits just as well as he knew those of his mate. He had flown

to a nearby tree and sat there within striking distance. We looked in vain for his shadow up in the trees in front of us, but we saw him not. All were startled when down he pounced, right in front of us, struck and grabbed—we heard a faint “Squee-ee-eek!”—and all was still!

## CHAPTER XXIII

Then away with longing, and ho! for labor!  
And ho! for love, each one for his neighbor.  
For a life of labor and study and love  
Is the life that fits for the joy above.

While I sat concealed beneath that thin thatch of hay, with the members of the Watson family, I wondered at the exceptional intelligence manifested by those parents in rearing their children to a full appreciation of that evening scene.

The night prowlings of Mr. and Mrs. Barn Owl are not often a source of pleasurable pastime among the little folk. Yet Amanda and James Watson seemed to have found a way to make this effort and all others connected with the subject of Nature appeal to those whom they were rearing as their own children. No day passed that some incident did not come into their lives which was rich in values to each one of them.

Only such a bringing up could have guaranteed the quiet, immobile audience that greeted the owl family as they sallied forth upon their evening depredations out underneath the trees, alongside that hayrick.

Mother and Father Watson had taken each



child at the teachable age entirely into their confidence, and he was shown the manner in which all sorts of wild things lived their lives. Their development had been along the lines of intimate association with these creatures. All the species of birds that lived with them or that visited them semi-annually were the chosen companions of these people daily—becoming as companionable as such folk will permit.

The natural method of ridding farms of rodent pests was exhibited at every opportunity. The children were taught the difference between letting the birds do their work and the employment of guns and poisons in the settlement of such questions.

Occasionally a poisoned bird of a valuable species was brought to them and shown as an example of such riddance. Such pertinent object lessons caused shudders of disfavor for those usages. Of course they preferred to have beautiful, songful bird-life around their home and all over the farm, so each one voted unwaveringly for the birds rather than for poisons and guns!

The owl entertainment was staged two or three times annually as reminders of the faithfulness of this species of birds to “do its bit” when given a free rein.

There did not seem to be enough that this family could do to render the lives of the hawks and owls nesting near them easier and more perfectly happy from the bird’s point of view. The life of a valuable collie

had been sacrificed to the poison usages a few years before, and this fact might have contributed much to influence them in their unvarying treatment of wild creatures.

The teaching of the children had been that the natural food of these rapacious birds was the rodent life everywhere so abundant; that when the natural enemies of these animals were killed off by mankind, he alone was the sufferer! With their development along these lines was taught the source of man's food, as well as its essential contents and value. Ever since each child could remember he had known the natural food of bird species and how each suffered when that food was lacking. This wisdom gave them almost unheard-of advantages over their neighbors who were indifferent to such things and allowed them to build where the others tore down!

In the preparation of themselves for such an adventure—for so it was termed by every one of them—they had learned that absolute concealment from those sharp-visioned birds, as well as positive immobility, were the first essentials to success. That each one must be garbed in the color of his surroundings if he hoped to remain hidden from view. Black clothing was tabooed because it showed black through the light covering of hay, and became a new feature in the owl's environment.

Every available method was brought into use by this family to teach the necessity of

co-operation with Nature at all hazards! So far their efforts had been successful. They advocated them because the course pursued made a direct appeal to the children as being the most reasonable thing to do.

The owl conservation lesson consumed but a few minutes. We knew that the owls fed more or less sumptuously, according to the supply to be found, and that even "Paradise" afforded a small percentage of their nightly catch. The ranches in the immediate vicinity gave forth a still greater number of rodents, while those more distant and less apt to make any effort to save the birds were infested by the furry creatures and suffered much from their presence.

We adjourned quietly to more comfortable quarters in the house as soon as we were offered no more entertainment by the owl family. We had scarcely reached the big sitting-room before each child began to seek information upon one or more points which were not positively clear in his mind. A number of original observations were made, each one of which was used to impress the value of using eyes and ears upon all occasions.

A slogan adopted by this family—one which they taught to all beginners—was worded about as follows: "Keep your eyes and your ears open, and your mouth shut!" I was assured that this made excellent observers out of anyone able to follow the

advice, and gave a fund of information unobtainable by any other course.

The discussion was continued while we sat before the big fireplace, heaped high with old stumps, knots and logs salvaged from nearby canyons and gulches. Some occupied big, roomy chairs facing the bright firelight, while others sat or lay at full length on the long woolen rug stretched from one end to the other of the wide hearth. Lucy wanted to learn why the owls made their appearance so soon after nightfall.

"Because they're noc-noc-nocturnal birds," suggested Jimmy. "Them's the kind o' birds what gits their food at nights—that's what I mean."

"That is the correct word, Jimmy," I told the boy laughingly. "That is one more big word to your credit; but I wonder where you first heard it. Can you tell me?"

"I dunno!" he responded quickly. "I heard it lots when I was a little feller, but I can't allus 'member it."

Turning to Lucy, I said: "The rodents can get around at night about as well as they can in daytime. They secure their food as well at one time as another, and have enemies that prey upon them at all times. I have always felt, however, that they considered themselves more secure when out foraging under cover of darkness, because they had but about one enemy against which they must guard themselves, and that was the owl. To be sure, cats and larger carnivorous

animals feed upon them also, but they are better able to get away from such creatures.

“These barn owls never pretend to hunt in the day time, but there are several species of owls that are diurnal in habit. Mice, gophers, rats and such animals sleep much during the day and, like these night birds, the moment darkness covers the earth they begin to seek for their food, and feel quite secure in doing so. The owls are aware of this trait, and they know as well that only a small amount of food is sufficient for the rodent classes. This fact urges the owl families forth while their prey is seeking his. The owls are firm believers in the early bird getting the worm—in this instance, the mouse!

“Grains, weed-seeds and suitable vegetable food is not always easy to secure when these fur-bearing creatures require it. Such a scarcity causes them to leave their foraging until they may go farther from home to points where it may be more plentiful. The night scoutings make splendid times for all sorts of animal revels, and many species take great delight in such entertainment. Food they must have, and to get it requires an effort involving an element of chance. The owl is by far the more crafty one, being feathered, winged and visioned for just such adventures.”

The hour was still early, so we sat talking about such occurrences and discussing the value of accurate data concerning the wild

folk and man's co-operation with them. The children still hovered happily near the fireplace, eating apples and nuts and wishing the birds had as comfortable a place in which to sit, with as much to eat as they had. Lucy asked her mother, during a lull in the conversation: "Why can't we have the light out, ma, an' set in the firelight? It's a lot more comfy that a way!"

As soon as the lights were extinguished, we drew near to the blazing logs and wondered about the creatures of the desert, those far up in the mountains curled up in cozy winter quarters or sitting humped up among the firs and pines, with deep snow all around them.

Jimmy left the circle suddenly and without saying a word. He went into his room and returned in a moment with a big book under his arm, and again lay down upon the rug.



## CHAPTER XXIV

Nature-love tends toward naturalness and toward simplicity of living. It tends countryward. One word from the fields is worth two from the city. God made the country.—Liberty Hyde Bailey.

Slowly and laboriously the boy turned the pages of the book, his inseparable companion while indoors, the mother told me. After a while he seemed to have found the place he sought, and, thrusting one finger between the pages, he rolled partly over and awaited his chance to offer what he had to say.

The conversation still concerned the noiseless chase we had witnessed a short time previously out in the stack-yard. From my chair I could get an occasional glimpse of the book Jimmy squeezed so tightly in his hand. He changed his position a little, let the book fall open, and as I peered over his shoulder I saw the picture of a barn owl on the page in front of him.

Just at that moment the conversation lagged a little, so I used the opportunity to say to him: "What have you in that book, Jimmy, that you wanted to speak about?"

"When we was settin' out aside the stack out yonder," replied the boy, "I was thinkin' 'bout a word I read in here t'other day what

I c'u'dn't pernounce. I was readin' 'bout the owls, an' it's a word 'bout's hard as them others we had today."

"I bet I know what word he's goin' to ast 'bout," boasted Lucy quickly, "coz he's got it marked in that book, an' I was readin' it t'other day—an' it means when a bird vom-its, but I can't pernounce it!"

Jimmy smiled indulgently upon his sister, for they were great pals in all out-of-door work, and jokingly asked her to spell the word for him. But the girl refused to attempt such a hard combination of letters, and turned to me, saying: "How do you pernounce it, I'd like ter know?"

"Do you mean the word 'regurgitate,' Lucy?" I suggested.

"That's it!" cried Jimmy, "an' I c'u'dn't pernounce it nuther."

"An' it means," excitedly explained Lucy, "that a bird like the owls swallows a mouse er a gopher whole, without much cuttin' up; an' then, after two-three days, it re-re-reurgitates the head an' a hull lot o' little bones, an' sometimes they're all rolled up in little balls—an'—an'—what's that yuh call them little balls, Jimmy? I fergit."

"Aw, yuh mean pellets—that's what yuh mean!" explained the boy.

"Yes, that's it; an' I found a lot o' them pellets 'round where the ole owl's nest is," continued the girl, unabashed. "An' one day I went into the barn to peek at the mother owl an' her babies, an' I seen the

bare head uv a mouse er suthin' like it layin' on the ground."

"Don't yuh mean the skull uv the mouse, Lucy, dear?" asked the mother very gently.

"Yes, mother, I guess I do," smilingly replied the maiden.

"That reminds me, Jimmy," I said, as I turned to the boy who was lying so comfortably, face downward, on the rug. The book lay open before him. He faced the fire, with his head propped upright on his hand, shading his eyes from the strong firelight while he gazed intently at the picture of the owl. "Who talked to you about those big words we were using this afternoon out around the bird shelter?" I continued. "The manner in which you used them caused me to think somebody had taught them to you a long time ago."

"I dunno!" he asserted, as he looked at his mother, who was sitting around on the other side of the hearth. "But I kinder 'member oncet we had a woman teacher over at the ole place, when I was jist a little kid, who tole us a lot o' them kind o' words, an' she learned us ter use 'em, too. Who was that, ma?"

"It has been so long, my son, that I don't remember her name no more," declared Mrs. Watson. "Only I know she was a great teacher fer sich things. I used ter think I'd like ter go to school to her myself, fer she made me think a lot o' that air young man what I had fer two terms when I was a

young girl. She told us all about the things he used ter like so much."

"I know we c'u'dn't keep that boy home from school s' long as she taught in our deestrick, rain er shine!" chuckled Jim Watson. "An' he warn't old 'nuff ter go ter school nuther. She used ter take the hull passel o' them kids 'way out in the country, an' mebbe she'd be gone all day; an' she done most uv her teachin' that way. An' we used ter think she was kinder queer-like, but a awful good woman teacher."

"Do you know where this teacher is at present, Mrs. Watson?" I ventured to ask. "If she is anywhere in the state I'd like to go to see her."

"We hain't none of us heered nothin' 'bout her fer years," asserted the father quickly. "There be them as say there's a wonderful school like ourn used ter be way over 'cross the mountains in the far part o' the state."

"I have been hearing reports about a woman teacher off in the direction you mention," I affirmed, "who must be doing a work similar to that which is being done here at 'Paradise.' I am on my way now over to the ranch of friends of mine who live in the same district in which she teaches. I want to leave here very early tomorrow morning, make the tramp over the hills in time to catch the train that will take me into that school district and spend Monday at

her school listening to her teach Nature-study to her girls and boys."

"I'll try ter think o' her name if I kin afore yuh git off on yer tramp in the early mornin'," said the rancher to me. Then he turned to the children sitting about that warm fire and said, "Come, yuh kiddies, it's time ter git ter bed so's ter git up early like an' hike 'long a few miles with our friend. Come on now, off ter bed all on yuh!"

How those youngsters scampered away, happy in the thought they had been promised "a few miles" with me the following morning toward the unknown and uncharted haven I was seeking.

As they disappeared their father called one warning to them, "All ready at 6 o'clock in the mornin' if yuh spect ter go 'long—an' git up 'thout callin', too!" he said significantly.

I turned to the mother and asked, "How many will be ready at that hour?"

"Everyone in the house 'll be ready an' dressed fer breakfast at that time," she replied.

"Do you mean to say that you are going along also?" I questioned.

"Sure I am an' we'll even take the baby, we'll all be so glad ter go," she asserted as a rare smile overspread her face. "He'll soon be four yuh know an' that's the way we've brung up all the others. We believe in startin' early in this kind o' le'rnin' yuh know. I have a sort uv a sling, Jim calls it

my 'carry-all' which him an' me use to carry the baby in on long tramps like this one an' it don't bother nobody to hev the baby 'long with us."

I looked questioningly at the father who responded good naturedly, "Yep! all on us is goin' if yu'd like ter hev us."

"To be sure I would," I hastened to assure those parents who were so interested in this our common mission. "But I thought of stealing out of the house quietly about 6 o'clock, for I have a big twenty miles to go before I can get my train. And then I will not be able to reach my friend's ranch before dark."

"You'll make it all right, all right!" asserted Watson with a laugh, "an' have time ter spare."

It seemed to me I had just fallen asleep when something deep inside said to me, "Time to get up!" and my watch told me it was 5:15, just sufficient time in which to dress quietly and be down stairs to watch the girls and boys arrive.

I stood before the fireplace at 5:55 a. m.—and everyone in the family greeted me, smiling and ready for breakfast, waiting for me to appear!

It required but a few minutes to eat a hearty breakfast and shoulder packs ready for the start. Then the most interested cavalcade of trampers I ever saw, set out from "Paradise" promptly at 6:30.



## CHAPTER XXV

Hurt no living thing:  
Ladybird nor butterfly,  
Nor moth with dusty wing,  
Nor cricket chirping cheerily,  
Nor grasshopper so light of leap,  
Nor dancing gnat, nor beetle fat,  
Nor harmless worms that creep.

—Christina Rossetti.

The stars gave us a twinkling welcome that crisp November morning as we swung bravely up a trail leading into the foothills. Their light came to us through an atmosphere that was clean, cool and crystalline. Something drove buoyantly and boldly ahead of their brilliancy, which reached us instantly upon our setting our feet out of doors. It came to each tramper as he drew in a deep, all-satisfying inhalation of fresh morning air. Shoulders were thrown back, heads were tossed high and eyes bored straight forward and upward into the early light of dawn.

Lucy set the pace. The younger children followed her closely and Mrs. Watson walked easily in the middle of the line. Jimmy brought up the rear with his father and myself.

The first two miles of the trail lay behind

us as we approached a narrow gorge leading into the main canyon although well up on its side. Lucy stopped at this point without a word from any of us and all adjusted our packs to more comfortable positions. Each member of the party carried something slung from shoulders or back with which he had been entrusted before we left "Paradise." Even the four-year-old had a make-believe pack held securely in place over his shoulder by a thong. And he walked along as bravely and as sedately as the most experienced trumper in the party.

"What time do yuh hev ter git to Browns-ville this mornin'?" asked Jim Watson who was the first one to break the silence that had been maintained by all that sturdy line.

"My train goes through there for Smith-field a little after 1," I replied, "and it is now 7:15. That gives us plenty of time to make it because as soon as I reach the ridge yonder it will be an easy swing down grade all the way to town."

"Mandy an' me was plannin' to go 'bout five miles er so las' night when we was talk-in' it over," said the rancher.

"Can't we go further'n that, pa?" urged Jimmy.

"I was jist a-thinkin' that you an' Lucy might go on to where the short-cut trail comes in near the ole rock where they bed an' salt the sheep on the way out to winter range, yuh know," answered the boy's father. "Mother'n me kin take it easy like carryin'

the baby when he don't want ter walk an' you two kids kin ketch up with the rest uv us afore we git home."

"Gee, that'll be great, won't it Lucy?" Jimmy called back quietly to his sister.

"Huh-huh!" excitedly admitted the girl. "An' mebbe we kin see a lot o' birds er some grouse — an' we might run 'cross a ole 'porky'!"

These few minutes of quiet relaxation put a new lot of steam into each hiker and the little cavalcade went on toward the five-mile objective far up the canyon, with happy hearts.

We made our way upon a well trodden sheep-trail with plenty of room to travel comfortably and without any necessity for fighting brush at any time. Thousands of sheep crossed this divide twice annually, going into the summer range in the mountains and again when returning to the desert for winter. We walked Indian file of course, each one going as quietly as he could, keenly alive to the possibility of meeting some of the wild folk, either out for their morning drink of pure mountain water or for some winter berries which we saw in great abundance at every step.

Lucy again led us by a few yards busily engaged with ears and eyes keenly alert. Suddenly I saw her freeze and we heard a soft "S-sss-sst!" signalled back to us. All eyes endeavored to make out the cause of her stop by looking in the direction her head

was turned. She was staring fixedly up into a big fir about 20 yards off the trail and down grade. I heard Jimmy whisper, "There 'tis! A big ruffed grouse a-settin' up there."

Sure enough Lucy had made the first find of the morning and as we took a good look at the beautiful fellow eyeing us from his lofty perch, I complimented her upon her ability to see him when he was not in motion.

A stellar jay scolded us roundly for invading his sanctuary at such an early hour and flitted from tree to tree ahead of us for two or three hundred yards. Another one of his family joined us just as a chickadee chatted sociably to us in great contrast to the note with which the larger birds welcomed our coming among them. "Chick-a-dee-dee-dee! Chick-a-dee-dee-dee!" sang the black-capped little hustler as he sought insect eggs and winter-hidden larvae in the crevices of the bark, first hanging head downward beneath a fir-branch, then briskly inspecting the twigs and branches of oak, alder and quaking-aspen. Always busy, always happily chatting to himself or to his hearers, always contented with what came to him, he sang as he worked and joyed because he had work to do—ransacking the forest trees for insect pests!

Each one of these wild folk was a friend of every member of the Watson family. Even the baby boy was listening with keen interest to the black-cap's joyous song and softly repeated as his mother directed him, the

lines of an old cradle-song about these birds which she had taught to all of her children:

The ground was all covered with snow one day,  
When two little children were busy at play.  
A gray bird came flitting close by on a tree  
And merrily singing: Chick-a-dee-dee!  
Oh, Chickadee-dee-dee, chicka-dee-dee,  
And merrily singing his chicka-dee-dee!

Oh, papa will buy him some stockings and shoes  
And a hat and a coat he may wear as he choose;  
And then he'll feel warmer and flit with more glee,  
While merrily singing his chickadee-dee!  
Oh, Chickadee-dee-dee, chicka-dee-dee,  
And merrily singing his chicka-dee-dee!

In this way we trudged along that old sheep-trail until we came to the point designated by the rancher for the family to halt, allowing Lucy and Jimmy to accompany me two or three miles farther up the mountain. No time was spent in saying "Good-bye!" because this mother and father had been accustomed to such scenes on many other trails for a good many years and they dropped to one side to allow the three of us to continue on our way.

The last view we had of them they were making their way slowly downward stopping whenever the inclination urged them to do so, to study the many interesting features they encountered beside the trail.

Lucy, Jimmy and myself pushed on to the top a little more speedily intending to spend

a half hour on the summit for a rest and observation period, before they hurried down the back trail to join their family, while I took up the short-cut into Brownsville by myself.

We sat upon an old log, each with his back up against a tree, quietly surveying our far and near surroundings, moving none and making no noise. What we had to say to each other as we scanned every portion of the country was said in a whisper. Jimmy gave the warning 'S-ss-st!' and told us we had a coyote visitor standing a hundred yards away sniffing the air as though he might have winded us, although the very light breeze blowing came from him to us.

Lucy and I gradually turned our heads until we saw him. He was a big fellow in splendid coat, lean and hungry-looking to be sure and his head was turned in the opposite direction to that which he seemed to be pursuing. He appeared to be watching something in the distance. Only for an instant he stood thus, then he trotted leisurely along the trail toward us. When within about 150 feet his sharp eyes spotted us and he slunk sidewise into the brush. That was our last sight of him as he sped away under cover.

Lucy and Jimmy stirred quickly, arose and calling out, "So long!" quietly trotted down the back trail.



## CHAPTER XXVI

In the early years we are not to teach Nature as a science, we are not to teach it primarily for method or drill; we are to teach it for loving—and that is Nature-Study. On these points I make no compromise.—Liberty Hyde Bailey.

I made my way down the mountain-side that quiet November morning without interruptions of any kind. No unusual scenes or episodes caused me to miss my train. I could look down upon Brownsville for more than an hour before I finally reached the village, about a half hour before the scheduled arrival of the daily accommodation train.

The poky train wound in and out of the valleys all the afternoon and finally landed me about dark at Smithfield, the little settlement I sought. There clustered around the post office, general store and a few unpretentious homes many good ranches with comfortable, home-like buildings settled thereon. Welcoming lamps sent their warming rays out into the night and the delectable odors of home cooking came to me from each house as I passed along the well worn road.

I travelled desertward for more than two miles where my friends dwelt on a big ranch in a thinly settled school district. The men

had been rounding up a bunch of cattle that day and all were late to supper. They were just ready to sit down to the table when I entered the house. They extended me a joyous, hearty greeting as I joined them at their evening meal. Many questions were asked about one mutual friend or another for the news from the outside was eagerly sought. In consequence of much talk upon affairs of the day it was near the close of the meal before I had an opportunity to make the object of my quest known.

The teacher I sought lived at their home!

I learned this after much quizzing for I was anxious to secure what facts were obtainable without arousing any comment from them concerning reports that had reached me in another part of the state. She was not at home nor would she be that night. A sick boy, her most misunderstood pupil—and always there seems to be such an one!—whose parents lived a mile in another direction had expressed the wish that she spend the night at his home.

I was glad of this because I wished to go to her school the following day unannounced. Her absence also gave me the opportunity to talk unrestrainedly with those good friends who harbored her for the present and I learned much from them concerning her and her methods.

The contrast of her labors with those of the Watson family at "Paradise" was wisely drawn. Only from what was told me that

evening I judged her work had a more perfect foundation and organization as well as a longer existence and thus was a source of greater wealth of accomplishment.

I was told that before this woman became the resident teacher among them their community had been rich in criticism and self-sufficiency yet poverty stricken in warm-hearted, constructive aid.

Since her arrival she had given a wealth of herself daily to every cause. She loved the fields and the woods, the mountains, meadows and the babbling brooks and all of the big and little dwellers that in them homed in natural peace and comfort. She was on intimate terms with the weeds and the trees, the grasses and the flowers, even of the fish that swam the turbulent mountain stream tumbling past her school-room door.

The birds which sang from the lone places on the desert or from the branches of trees in the neighborhood of her place of service, gave themselves freely and apparently to herself alone. Nothing in all creation was too insignificant for her most loving consideration.

This life-long contact with the wild folk—not wild to her by any means!—had established a state of reciprocation rarely observed in human beings. Of whatever she was possessed she gave abundantly, whether to the small boy with the stubbed toe, to the sweetly singing bird near her or to the

down-hearted girl, and always she was rewarded in proportion to that which she expended.

So were the wild creatures beloved by this woman-teacher!

The quiet, forceful influence of her poise and positiveness was felt in the district in which she served to an astonishing degree. She had succeeded in a large way in a most difficult field. Perhaps no one in that community had anticipated any such results from this unmuscular woman—may be it was because she was a woman, I do not know—for it had been their privilege always to look upon muscularity and prowess as men-servants of attainment.

The mental grasp with which this middle-aged school teacher handled all kinds of problems was the marvel of the little world she helped to administer. Yet this resourcefulness and power had been noised abroad but little. Her associates accepted her rulings in most matters as they would have received them from the judge on his bench. Those activities in which sometimes her opinions did not prevail at once proved at a later time to have been the wisest procedures if they had been carried out according to her beliefs.

From what my friends told me about her she was a woman who taught her pupils daily that to live was to build. She taught them that the out-of-doors was the school of efficiency. With those fundamentals she had

gone further into the lives of those who listened to her each day than her board of directors, her patrons or even her pupils realized.

She instilled into the eager, receptive minds of her girls and boys the natural laws of the universe. She led them by the invisible linked-leash of tolerance, understanding, sympathy and love. Each one was directed how to be himself at all times. That he could do as he pleased and neither she nor any other should hinder him—when he did not interfere with the rights of the other fellow. When he did anything to another that he would not like to have done to himself he must surely suffer.

She expounded this type of love to the girls and boys who sat beside her out on the desert or far up among the foothills, or in some quiet rock-walled canyon, with simple earnestness; and each one felt her calmative influence and learned to recognize the power when it came to him especially.

Theirs was a precious share of her all!

Was it any wonder that under such directorship they built permanently?

When I stepped close to the partly open door of the school-house the next morning she was sitting at her desk telling an anecdote of the wilds to a roomful of spellbound girls and boys. I was able to hear what she said for a few minutes without making my presence known to her. Had it not been for a small boy in the front seat who happened

to discover me hovering near the doorway, I might have heard her through to the end of her story. But the smile that overspread his face when he saw me peeking into that room caused her to stop.

She turned toward the door and when she observed me she gravely arose from her place. She greeted me quietly but cordially, offered me the only chair of which her kingdom boasted and went on with her talk.

I felt sorry for interrupting her trend of thought—if I did so—yet I was sure I needed the stimulant she was administering to those greedy ones on their benches else I would not have made the pilgrimage to her door.

I gleaned from what she said before I broke into the story, that she was co-relating Thanksgiving day and the value of wild-life to mankind. At any rate her story held her pupils enraptured as she drew her pictures with such rare power, patience and accuracy—gripped them tightly, for they sat with mouths wide open and eyes staring up into her face.

So much was mine!

She indicated to me that every day of suitable weather all the round year of service, they had their opening exercises and in them she forecast the outlines of the day's efforts and these were set before all of her pupils in a very comprehensive manner. Then she adjourned the formal session and went with



her school in a body into the open for the major part of the day! Usually they took their luncheons with them and ate at some wisely chosen spot that gave her always a hint of its appropriateness.

## CHAPTER XXVII

I like the plants that you call weeds—

Sedge, hardhack, mullein, yarrow—

Which knit their leaves and sift their seeds

Where every grassy wheel-track leads

Through country by-ways narrow.

—Lucy Larcom.

On this day of all days for me they were to make their way slowly and concernedly to a point where some grain fields ran close beside the border of the untamed desert. If I cared to do so I could accompany them—providing I could put up with the associations and the manner of spending the hours of the teaching day.

Could I stand it for those few hours? I wondered!

When we set out from the school building there was no boisterous play, no screaming and yelling and no one ran ahead of the company. While they were quite in the habit of faring forth in this manner daily there appeared to be no signs that such undertakings had dulled their appreciation of every step taken, on this day when I tramped with her, a disciple like the others.

To be sure there was good-natured girl-

and-boy raillery, subdued, mischievous laughter and innocent pranks of all sorts in which she participated to the fullest. She exacted the natural manifestations of all spirits. At no time was there any inhibition placed upon them. She taught them the most ideal spirit of play and urged its utmost development as the best safeguard for future adulthood.

It was her method of teaching that she should be with them in every romp, in every game as well as in all kinds of activities, no matter how simple and child-like they might be. In this way she was one of them in thought, word and deed. She shared their every delight, their petty annoyances and delved deeply with them in the great domain of nature. Her girls and boys realized it too.

About a mile from the school-house, which had been left unlocked and unguarded, she signalled for the first stop. Nearly an hour had been consumed in going this distance. Yet never before had I seen and heard so much in so short a time.

Nothing escaped her keenly alive senses. Each pupil had cultivated a like acuteness of observation under her tutelage. If a dozen of them had asked her questions at the same instant she was never perturbed. She answered all inquiries quietly and in her own time with accuracy and in the fewest possible number of words.

While I was among them, right in the centre of every activity or a careful observer at a distance from the group, there was no

disturbance, yet unconquered youth betrayed itself in every movement about me. When she answered one child each of the others listened quietly and profited as much as his individuality permitted.

The wise nature-woman, maybe it would have been better to have said natural woman, declared a rest of a half hour, or more if anyone demanded it. This new-way coterie of nature students looked forward to just such a performance and each one knew exactly what was expected of him for these hours.

As soon as packages of luncheon and other impediments had been disposed of properly each girl and boy started off alone from the camp. Only the limitations of the quest were named to them before they started: "Not more than 100 feet in all directions from this common centre," was suggested.

Instantly each pupil was bound on a reconnaissance seeking the unusual offerings of this particular environment. These endeavors meant but one thing to the young enquirers—to return empty-handed was to acknowledge defeat!

I wondered if they understood the significance of her teachings! To me they implied the impossibility of going far afield without seeing something or hearing something that was at once new and of untold interest to the seeker. They told me as well that there was so much within reach of the student which was available for his assimilation and absorption that only a very small portion of

it could be encompassed in a single lifetime.

Such girls and boys spelled efficiency with big capitals always! Schooled with the understanding that perfect health was the basis of real efficiency they sought the only course that gave to them what was demanded in the battle for human fitness, untrammelled effort in the open! To add to his worth as a unit of this tiny community each child clasped a notebook and pencil in his hand ready for use..

She stood in the centre of this living circle of youth prepared at an instant's notice to go to the assistance of anyone of her flock—erect, poised and thoughtful. Every sense with which she was possessed was keenly alert to all emergencies.

The smallest ones of her learners garnered close to her—such was the arrangement. One little fellow, evidently a devoted one in her retinue, had made the discovery of something about which he exhibited some concern. He was not in the least excited as he called out, “Oo—ooh! I got sumfin’ here. Won’t yuh please come an’ look at it?”

She deserted her lookout and in an unhurried stride or two was beside him.

“It ain’t too big ter carry,” declared the boy, “but I’m a-skeered to pick it up!”

In a kindly, matter-of-fact way she stooped and picked up the remains of a big gopher snake that had been dead for some time. It was evident that his snakeship had been

seized by an owl or a hawk quite late in the season.

She bore the half-consumed reptile to the rendezvous. The small boy walked beside her rather proud of the distinction coming to him because he had found a valuable adjunct to the day's collection of interesting things. No other child ran to see what he had found although each of the others had heard his exclamations for help. No one yelled, "Oh, my, it's a snake!" and ran away as far as possible. Each was intent upon his own problem knowing that at the proper time the opportunity would be given to him to examine everything that was collected for the nature-study clinic.

Again she stood in the heart of her domain. It was a partly cleared sandy circle of about 25 feet in diameter, and she awaited the return of her field-workers. During the few minutes that remained for the twenty or more pupils yet to turn in the spoils of their quest and report before the first call was sounded, she employed herself in closely scrutinizing every inch of ground at her feet as well as a few yards away. I saw her go to a bunch of rabbitbrush, bend it to the ground and examine a softly platted alfilaria plant growing green under the protection of the bush. She patted the plant considerably, lingered for a moment admiring its autumn beauty and rejoined her allies with a face radiating good cheer and loving companionship.



Near the end of the rest-period she clapped her hands together twice. Almost a minute thereafter she struck her hands three times and began to sing a simple school song of child-life in which all joined lustily.

Big and little, leaders and laggards, romped around her seriously yet full of the spirit of play: each with his trophy of the quest. No one came in empty-handed!

Nothing was said regarding the disposition of the materials secured and made ready by the individual collectors for transportation toward any point she might lead them. From undivulged sources came forth straps, strings and papers with which to tie and wrap those precious bundles. Each young trumper appeared to be ready to take care of anything found upon such tours in the most scientific manner.

Spread out like a huge, living fan this cavalcade went forward to its noonday camping site. We strolled slowly and with keen interest in everything about us. Bright, eager eyes sought out the hidden spots which might shelter features of worth and made sure they were not overlooking an opportunity to add something to their records of accomplishment.

I never knew I had so many eyes in my head before that very hour!

## CHAPTER XXVIII

If one is to be happy he must live in sympathy with common things. He must live in harmony with his environment. He cannot be happy yonder nor tomorrow; he is happy here and now or never. Our stock of knowledge of common things should be great. Few of us can travel. We must know the things at home.—Liberty Hyde Bailey.

I studied this nature-teacher's every movement. I endeavored to read her very thoughts. In a measure I succeeded, for she lived her life openly—exactly as she had planned it. Perhaps a less observant follower might have overlooked much that passed between her and each child just before they began to sing together. He might not have caught the suggestion of thankfulness that beamed on her face as a reward for devotion to the cause.

I saw in the smile of each worker answering her with direct look the miracle of thought transference as we moved forward to our goal.

The wants of each individual had been carefully considered by this director; such forethought had become one of her regular duties upon leaving the schoolhouse. One

of the larger boys carried a large canteen full of water which was to be used wholly for cleansing purposes. The largest girl had one slung over her shoulders which contained drinking water—and not a child had made a demand upon its contents; each one was too much occupied with features of interest everywhere about him to think of himself and his needs.

We sat on the sand before this woman-director while she occupied a portion of a large stone on the crest of a gentle slope just a little above us. A rollicking, youthful melody, taken from the Scandinavian folk-songs and set to words composed by the teacher herself for such occasions, was the combined grace and invitation to begin eating.

The spot I occupied with the smallest “kiddies” was directly in front of her. Evidently it had been her selection because of its nearness to the center; but I heard no orders given to anyone regarding my position in that circle of seekers.

The very best of good-fellowship prevailed. No one had a complaint to register (a most extraordinary thing?—no, not always!) and so far as I was able to observe, every one of the girls and boys present was a perfectly normal individual!

The song commended the food we were to eat to its ultimate perfect consumption and fullest use. The words dwelt particularly on the ignorance of gormandizing and haste

in performing the most necessary act we undertake daily.

Bright eyes danced as those girls and boys sang and ate their wholesome food from hands carefully cleansed before touching anything. Not a portion of anything was wasted; not a bit was left uneaten!

Mirthful, carefree, happy faces, that were wreathed in the most satisfied smiles I ever beheld, surrounded that simple desert board. Voices spoke unopposed—whenever they had anything worthy to offer—and I failed to observe a single individual in that rendezvous who appeared to have made the hike merely for the purpose of having “a good time!”

They talked intelligently about food composition as each pupil ate what he had brought with him for his luncheon. The piece of food held in the luncher's hand was the foundation of the remarks that were made. Everything that was said was entirely within the comprehension of the youngest child present. One character of food was commended while another failed to meet her approval. In all of her observations I never once heard her use the word “ought.”

I ate my cheese, “ry-krisp,” peanuts and chocolate-almond bars right under the guns. A juicy, red Johnathan apple furnished me with my dessert. I observed many quizzical glances in my direction because of the unusual character of the food I was eating. They seemed to be interested more in the

amount I ate than in the quality of the food of which I had partaken.

The director talked for some time on the value of concentrated foods being carried with one whenever packs had to be shouldered and borne for long distances. She made it plain to each one that it was not the amount one ate which kept the engine going; rather was it the food content that the materials contained, and that no overloading was attempted.

There was no conversation during the meal except that which treated of the subject of food values. Once in a while someone volunteered a story pertinent to the day and its quest, and while it was being related teacher and pupil alike gave him their wrapt attention.

Permission to indulge in song or story was never sought. Each felt it his duty to contribute to the gaiety of the occasion as well as to attempt the instruction of others by his relation of some feature when he believed he was capable of making an acceptable rendition. Anything which would augment the constructive worth of the effort in hand he was urged to relate forthwith and to feel perfectly free in doing so. No child made an offering that had its source anywhere except in absolute truth. This director tolerated no guessing!

The luncheons were finished about an hour after the opening grace-song had been rendered. While some of the slower eaters were





FIG. 19. Avocet Nest, Found Near New State Gun Club, Utah, April 26, 1919.





FIG. 20. Nest of Long-billed Tule-Wren in Bullrushes.

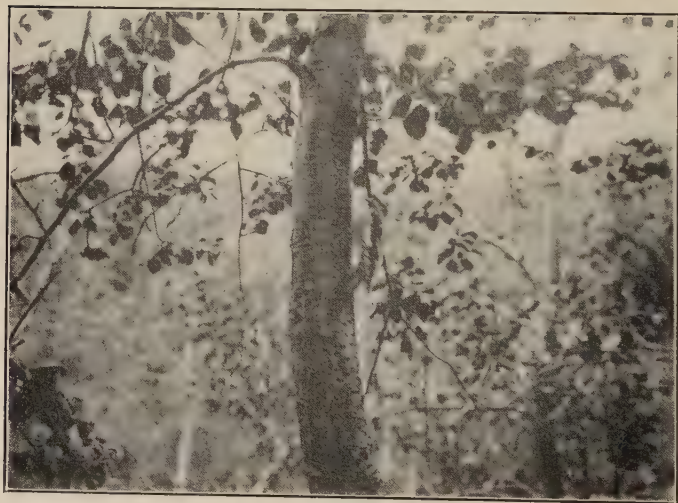


FIG. 21. Sapsucker on Tree Trunk.

dallying over the last few bites, saving a chosen tidbit for the last swallow, the teacher recited a nature-poem of great beauty and simplicity. No applause followed this offering; no word was spoken. The thoughts of all seemed to be in happy accord with the spirit of the reading.

Suddenly I observed that I was the only one of the party who had made any attempt to discover what the fellow sitting beside me was doing. Naturally, I wondered what he thought of the performance and why he had remained so quiet. I thought I did my gazing around very carefully, too; yet the moment my curiosity became exposed to the eyes of those keen-witted youngsters I realized that I was wholly without the circle in which I cared so much to live.

My eyes sought the earth in some embarrassment at being guilty of such a disturbing act; yet how could I refrain from peering about me at the height of such exciting activities?—I'd like to know!

After I believed I had been so deeply submerged in my sea of confusion that nevermore would I be able to reach the surface, all voices broke into the sweetest, softest music. Then I closed my eyes and went into what I considered to be physical seclusion.

They sang of sunlit meadows, the blue sky and waving grains; it was like an echo of the whispering winds which swept our heads gently and left us enraptured with the harmony of Nature's vibrant voices.

Beginning softly and in unison, the song grew in volume and power, until suddenly all changed, and soprano and contralto mingled in sweetest combination. Then the girls took up the motif alone, and the boys followed in a fugue that sent the creeps down my spine until I squirmed with delight! The song closed in a bright, catchy round of four parts, which appeared entirely undirected, utterly spontaneous. Just before the finale, all stood and sang, in a rich concerted effort, the gloriously beautiful chorus.

An interim of twenty minutes of play followed immediately. The pupils assembled in comrade groups and strolled about without hindrance or admonition.

While I walked slowly from one point to another about the camp I became convinced that this was the woman-teacher who had left herself so vividly impressed upon the boyish imagination of Jimmy Watson more than ten years previously. At that time I had heard about her having a boy pupil of unusual promise. A mite of a fellow he was at that time, scarcely able to toddle the mile that lay between his home and the school-house; yet he came alone, and never missed a day during the year in which she taught near his home. Surely, that boy must have been Jimmy Watson. I had made my discovery!

This time the strolling bands of girls and boys were reunited by a boy who imitated the assembly bugle-call perfectly. From play

to directed effort called work (all was play to me!) they came in rollicking good humor, each vieing with the other in reaching his place in the charmed circle first, yet always without unnecessary noise or disturbance.

Some of the children carried new bundles of materials gathered for the afternoon's consideration. Others conversed learnedly about the advantageous points of certain vegetation growing on all sides of them, while a few clung together and sang cheerily and in fine harmony a simple melody of the open air.

## CHAPTER XXIX

Little flower, but if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is.

—Tennyson.

The queen-mother of this band of modern Druids occupied her throne-rock with dignity and composure. Each little Druid settled into his place quietly and in time to hear the opening announcements of the afternoon's study period.

All were at attention! Nobody waited for anyone else; no one had to be admonished to "Keep still; we are waiting for you!" I was amazed at the happy seriousness of the effort, actually comprehended by each one in the little company, as I was taught its value as a constructive agent.

In accord with previously laid plans, the reading lesson of the day was about to be given. A girl who might have been in "Fourth B" hunched forward about a pace nearer the director's rostrum to a place where she could sit more comfortably while she read her story. Every eye was fixed upon the young reader. Every inflection of the eager, girlish voice was heard. There was a message in her reading for each indi-

vidual, and each one appeared to have the capacity to receive it.

The little miss was about five minutes reading her selection. When she had finished she resumed her place in the circle, and all was still.

It was a story urging a more natural consideration of every created thing, and the art of the young reader was used with much effect. She told of a boy of about seventeen years of age who had a very wonderful collection of mounted insects that were scientifically classified and filed away in tight cabinets. He had gathered these many specimens while traveling with his father to the distant places of the world. Such trips had afforded him unusual advantages to satisfy his cravings for a collection of insects, and he applied himself diligently to the task of housing an immense number of the creatures.

As the little entertainer continued the tale, her hearers learned that this boy had fads of several kinds which he had pursued until he became wearied by the labor involved. In his youth he had collected coins and stamps. Later he engaged heart and soul in the hunting of bird's eggs and their nests. At the time of the writing he was making every effort to secure the largest insect collection obtainable. In securing these collections of many kinds he traded, bought and sold, and in every possible way gained his purpose.

He used certain well-known laboratory



methods in killing the insects, but in spite of his care (perhaps it was the lack of care—who knows?) an occasional one struggled and seemed to live longer than others lived. He admitted that occasionally one made inconsequent efforts for freedom—from what? Perhaps it was again to rise upward toward the blue sky unfettered; it might have been to crawl upon the earth's surface unhindered among its kind. More than likely it was the pang of separation from earthly existence because of his unjustified interference with the creature's right to live!

This ardent collector had shown his specimens with great pride to many visitors. Occasionally some keen observer of his storehouse of treasures suggested to him that there might be an element of cruelty connected with his procedures. The youth resented this reference emphatically, for he was too deeply under the spell of the game to listen to any sort of an appeal.

"Insects don't have feelings!" he was reported to have said with considerable warmth on more than one occasion.

One young man was said to have answered this rejoinder rather spiritedly: "But insects have nerves, haven't they? Don't you suppose they are capable of suffering when so tortured?"

No matter to the embryo entomologist; he was bent upon satisfying an overweening desire to acquire this collection, as he had

the stamps, coins, bird's eggs and nests. His vanity must be indulged at any cost!

I was positive that I observed an extraordinary eagerness thrill everyone in hearing of the young reader when she had finished. There were several anxious ones ready to stand and tell about the impressions made upon them by hearing of such an occurrence.

The boy-hero of our tramp, he who had found the reptile remains, was the first one on his feet. He stepped forward and addressed himself to the director and his school-mates: "Gee! I wouldn't like to be smuvered in a ole bottle an' 'en sticked up on a pin to be killed like that. No bad smellin' stuff fer me, I tell yuh. It might hurt! An'—an' when I die I want ter die all to oncet. Them little fellers don't seem to hev no fair chancet, so they don't."

A sixteen-year-old girl stood in her place and remarked thoughtfully: "I never could see what good it does to want to kill everything, anyhow. It don't seem right to me. What good does it do anyone to hev a stuffed bird 'round the house or to hev an insect with a pin stuck through it jist fer people to look at? It sure don't make no hit with me."

"An' it's jist fer that reason I can't kill a chicken 'round the house no more," chimed in a boy of twelve years. "An' it most made me stop eatin' meat too, 'coz if I c'u'dn't kill anything fer myself to eat, I can't see how

I c'u'd eat it when it had been killed fer me by some other feller."

Other pupils expressed themselves regarding the story, and told with child-like directness just how they felt concerning such practices. There was no one in the party who cared to learn anything about the wild folk if it were necessary to obtain the knowledge through such lack of consideration.

The teacher sat quietly observant of every one of her charges. An unvoiced appeal went out to her from these open-air delvers—purely mental, of course—as their answers came to them from eyes shining with the brilliancy of truth and power. Every face was illumined with the smile of positive contentment.

I was closely observant of every move, yet I failed to catch the signal to arise. I stood with them, wondering. Instantly they formed in a long line and began to march around her in a big circle. While they tramped they sang a marching tune which made one's blood tingle! They executed various movements with arms and legs; their bodies swayed one way and another rhythmically, and their heads bent in opposite directions as they received their cue from this master-director.

I stepped off to one side, alertly mindful of everything, yet all the time I felt I was an outsider. It is not to be expected that I should be able to participate intelligently

unless I were in perfect harmony with the director—how could I?

The reason I failed to hear any commands was because she led this band wholly by mental suggestion. She had employed this method of direct contact with individuals all of her teaching years. This manner of leadership had been in vogue in that community for more than a year. So well had she succeeded that all of her patrons and friends acknowledged her unexcelled power in leading them into harmonious ways.

Only three or four minutes were consumed by this setting-up exercise, when each one found himself at his place, ready to begin his search. They assumed easy lounging postures, such as were best suited to the character of the ground. At once they began to arrange their materials, in order that they might the more easily give their specific reasons for making the selections. Apparently without being told to do so, they arranged themselves according to the natural kingdoms into which man divides all creation.

When they became seated, I failed to answer the general signal to do so. I remained on my feet that I might watch this teacher and every participant. All eyes were turned inquiringly upon her. Instantly I observed that this nature-study clinic was to be intuitively guided. The little boy speaker was on his feet, holding the snake remnants in his hands as unconcernedly as though he held a baseball bat!

“Teacher says I shouldn’t kill no snakes ’coz they’re good fer the farmers,” he said by way of introduction. “My brother Bill he used ter kill um, but he don’t do it no more. Teacher showed us how they eats lots an’ lots uv grasshoppers an’ big beetles an’ other fin’s, an’ rats an’ mice an’ gophers, too—huh-huh, she did. An’ she tole me er snake had jist ’s good a right ter live as I hev—so she did.”

## CHAPTER XXX

The mute insect, fix't upon the plant  
On whose soft leaves it hangs, and from whose cup  
Drains imperceptably its nourishment,  
Endear'd my wanderings. —Wordsworth.

I observed one extraordinary feature of this nature-study teacher, and that was her method was not of the informing type. The detailing of dry facts was tabooed! Each one of her girls and boys had five senses, and these were stimulated to their utmost capacity. She insisted upon actual contact with the thing about which they demanded information. She employed this character of instruction daily—practiced it upon all occasions, and gave as proof of their investigations the specific knowledge each one possessed on any subject.

Even while the child orator was discoursing upon the value of harmless snakes and making his plea for their preservation, two of the older boys were using the remains to illustrate her methods. They cut open the snake's stomach and showed its contents. They took out the undigested remains of desert lizards, grasshoppers, field mice and other unrecognized structures. With the exception of the desert lizard, all the remnant



animal life found in his snakeship was injurious to man's crops; they ate of his substance, so to speak, without contributing to his welfare.

A second young lecturer took up the subject of the snakes, and said: "One day, when we was out on the desert, teacher showed us the diffrunce 'tween a good snake an' a bad snake. We found someone had killed a ole rattler in the road, an' all on us c'u'd see the heads was not the same. Fer the good snake's head was long an' pointed like, an' it won't bite yuh; but that time we seen the rattler had a square kind uv a head an' wide jaws jist like a bulldog's, an' them's the ones what kill thin's when they bite 'em—most right on the spot!"

The little miss told her companions what she and the others had learned on that trip, and she drew a very good picture of the difference between harmless and venomous snakes. She insisted that no one should come in contact with snakes unless they were just as well acquainted with each variety as they were with their own folks at home. When she sat down the boys who had been doing the snake dissection laid the various structures in plain view, and in groups of two or three all went to look them over. It was an exhibit of real worth to all of us, and one that was carried on wholly by her pupils.

While the clinic was going on, each child felt free to act as he chose. He had learned that he alone was responsible for his own

conduct always, and that credits came to him only after they had been earned.

At this point two girls arose and stepped behind their comrades, because they were able to illustrate their talks more easily from that position. Each had selected a branch of sage, and she was to demonstrate her reason for making the choice of this common plant. The smaller girl admitted her discovery of the difference in the two specimens. It was in the leaves that she had found the wide variation. Pointing to her companion's branch, she added: "Mine has narrow, thin leaves, an' Mary's has stubby-like ones with notches in 'em. I never saw that afore."

The girl standing with her said: "An' that's a new thing fer me, too. An' I don't remember that I ever seen the thick stems like this one which had its bark peeling off like cedar trees do 'till today."

These speakers exhibited the variations in species they had noted, and the results were jotted down in notebooks with great eagerness. How seriously those little fingers wrote out the story of these investigations, and how pleased all seemed to be because of the bit that had been added to their fund of general information.

An all-pervading silence hovered about us as this effort at concentration was being made. Those tractable pupils were not more busy than was their leader. She scanned every portion of the scrubby growth on all sides of us with critical gaze, as though she

expected something to appear that was the least bit behind schedule.

I observed her become suddenly rigid. At once I heard a gently spoken warning wafted to every worker by one of her faithful, understanding girls. No one stirred! The teacher's eyes were riveted on something entirely out of my line of vision, yet I dared not move. In whispered tones her steward told us a bird had just alighted on a bush close by.

Each one of those keenly alert observers adapted himself to a position of patient waiting, holding himself ready for instructions concerning future movement. Seemingly without moving, I slowly turned my head in the direction the teacher's line of vision indicated, in order that I might gain a good position from which to view the newcomer.

With the same care each rigid figure who knew he could accomplish a change so slight that the bird would not see him move, adopted my method at once. Those who found they must move their bodies, sat or lay perfectly still. A few had been looking in the direction from which the little bunch of animation had come originally, and were not obliged to move. He hopped gaily from one bush to another, cocked his head on one side, that he might the more easily study those unusual desert growths—which evidently he thought they must be—and hunted seeds as he inspected us.

He maintained a sort of chattering chirp

as he flitted about within some ten yards of us, all the time in earnest, critical observation. No time was lost by the onlookers. They noted mentally his every movement, as well as his most distinguishing features. Then because the little chirper stayed longer than they expected he would remain near us, they made their inspection of him more complete. All went over him again and again, seeking carefully his finer points of identification.

He was off with a sidelong flutter when a magpie came sailing above us as he called out warningly, "Ma-ag, ma-ag! ma-ag!" telling that weed-seed searcher that in all probability he was in dangerous company. The tension of the several minutes was relaxed, and we rested more at ease. The pupils talked to each other quietly, and earnestly compared notes regarding the bird's most characteristic features.

"What did you see?" was the unvoiced question that came to us out of the air. Instantly several youngsters were on their feet to tell of their observations. There was no haste, no commotion. There was no discussion regarding who was first on his feet, yet the one first to speak did so by right of priority that was acknowledged by all.

"I never had sich a close view o' this bird afore," he admitted. "But I'm sure I've seen him somewheres. I never seen so much white in his tail afore, I guess, an' that's what makes me feel I don't know him so

well. I wrote his name here in my book, an' I'll wait to see 'f I'm right."

"I know him all right," spoke up a little girl who was looking in the bird's direction when he flew near us. "I've seen him in the brush near our house lots uv times, an' we looked up his name."

"Seems to me," said the next observer—a slow, careful-speaking boy—"this bird had more pink on his sides, an' his head was grayer than the ones I've seen 'round here afore. I know his name all right, but them we've got over to our house hev blacker heads an' necks, an' they hain't got that awfully pink side."

"I seen he had pink sides, too," reported a girl anxious to have her say in the identification of the bird, "but I don't know him at all, an' I'm sorry I don't."

"An' he had a yaller-like bill an' a blackish head an' some white tail feathers on the sides; but I ain't 'quainted wif 'im," volunteered a small boy who hitherto had not spoken.

"How many think they've named him right?" questioned the eldest girl. Being one of the bird-stewards of the school, it devolved upon her to ask all questions, effect all settlements, and act for the teacher upon most occasions. "What have you written about him, Sarah?" she interrogated a girl still standing.



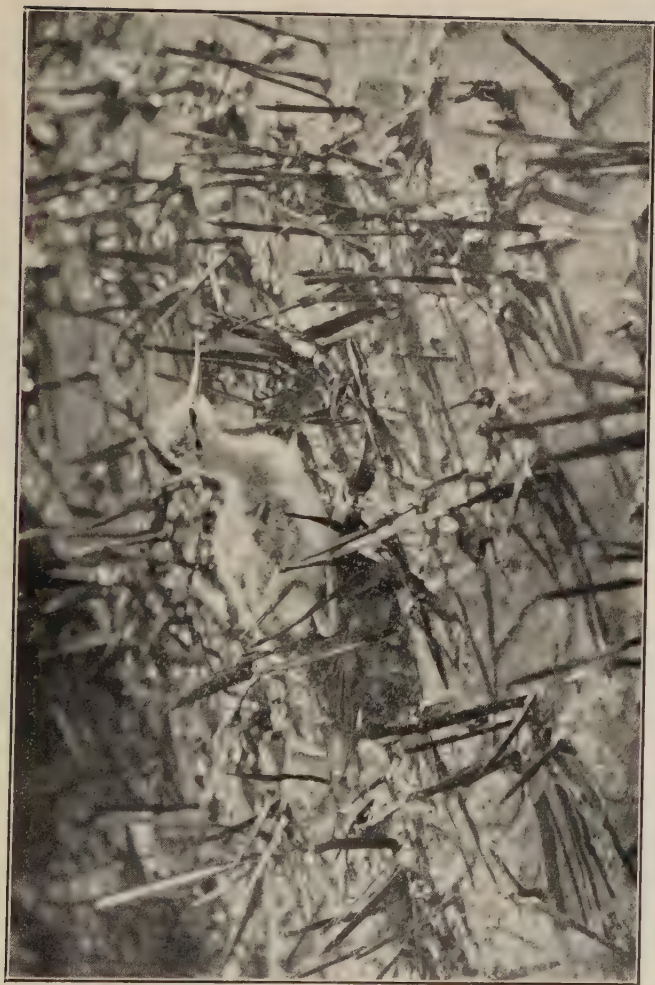


FIG. 22. Young Avocet Crouching in a Burned-over Area.





FIG. 23. Young Bluebirds at Entrance to Bird House.

## CHAPTER XXXI

Go forth under the open sky, and list  
To Nature's teachings. —Bryant.

The girl addressed read from her notebook as follows: "He is a little smaller than the English sparrow, has a gray-black head and neck, and white on his stomach and breast. Just a little pink on his sides, too, and he has a yellowish beak shaped like a sparrow's. I saw some white in each side of his tail as he flew away. I named him a junco, an' I've seen lots of 'em."

"How many have that name for this bird?" questioned the bird-steward. Nearly everyone in the company knew him as a junco. To some, to be sure, he was a stranger, as were many other birds.

The boy who was slow about giving his opinion seemed to have gained a more perfect view of the visitor. He insisted that, while the little fellow was a junco, to him at least it was a new species. "I'm sure this bird didn't have sich a black head, an' he had lots more pink on his sides than the ones we have 'round here," he declared stoutly. "An' that's what makes me believe it's a new kind in these parts."

I had my eyes on the director all the time

this boy was making his assertions. The moment he announced himself as confident that the bird was a species different from the commoner kind I observed a flash of keen interest overspread her face. She smiled tenderly toward him, giving him to understand her pleasure at his acuteness of perception. Instantly the lad recognized the fact that he had made an observation of signal worth. This was her sign to him as a reward for painstaking effort, the only gift at her disposal, for this boy or for any other pupil.

A number of the others gave excellent descriptions of this newcomer and talked knowingly about his great value as an insect and weed destroyer. One of the comments of special merit was made by the little maiden who had remarked previously upon this bird's beak. Her added information was that this bird had a weed-seed eating type of beak. It was short, thick and strong, enabling its owner to open seed-pods of all descriptions and get at their edible contents. She remarked that whenever she saw a bird with such a beak she knew at once that he ate not only large quantities of weed-seeds but insects as well.

A rigid correction of notes was instituted at once and ample time was given each pupil to make as full additions to his notebook as he felt disposed to undertake. In this manner each child wrote out a very intelligent outline of this particular species of junco. The big girl bird-steward urged them to be

accurate and to have their corrections correspond with the boy's notations in every particular. She said it was very essential to make it plain in their notebooks that this bird was the pink-sided instead of the Oregon junco.

The last notes were read by one of the larger girls who had named the bird correctly, but she said she wished to amplify the life history of this species, if she might do so. She had made the necessary corrections, and then hastened to read as follows: "The junco builds his nest always on the ground. It is made out of small roots and dry grasses, and is placed under a rock or behind one, or in a small hollow at the foot of a tree. The mother bird lays four greenish-white eggs marked with dark brown spots. The parents feed their babies quantities of insects and weed-seeds. They are good friends of the ranchers and the fruit-growers. They are cheerful, happy birds, and have a little chirp for a song."

This bevy of ardent workers was sorry when Mr. Junco flew away, and a few remarked they would like to watch the birds all day. Such observations always brought a smile to the face of their director, as she indicated to them that a live bird was not the only thing surrounding them which possessed life!

A lull in the conversation disclosed a debating group off to one side that had entirely surrounded two girls who appeared to be

the leaders in the discussion. I heard one of them say: "My flower is a aster."

"So's mine!" urged the other speaker.

"Betcha they ain't 'like, though," chipped in a big boy who was listening intently to all that was being said. "Jist yuh look at that, will yuh! The one what you've got, Mollie, has narrer petals, an' your'n, Kitty, has wide ones. Think them are 'like?"

"I see now they ain't jist 'like," admitted little Mollie. "But I've allus called them kind o' flowers asters, 'coz I thought they was. Does anyone know what them others is?"

"Yuh betcha I know!" sang out Billy, the boy who had called the girls' attention to the differences in their specimens. "'Most everyone calls them air two flowers asters—but they ain't. Teacher showed us the diffrunce last fall, an' that they b'longed to the same fambly, but they're diff runt. The one Mollie has is a fleabane, an' Kitty's is a aster sure!"

My eyes sought the director's face, and once more I saw that rare smile of hers. This time it was for the boy who had just spoken, and it was his recompense for specific attainment. Everyone gazed full upon her as she mentally thanked Billy, who, turning toward them, said: "I never fergit what she tells us when we hev the thing right square in our hands to see, nuther!"

A kindly wave of the hand sent all of them scampering away to gather up luncheon



boxes, clothing and such things, singing as they went, in preparation for the start homeward. The most wholesome spirit of playfulness permeated the entire group. There was keen but friendly rivalry in getting everything ready to break camp. The first five to be ready were sent off as a police squad to clean up the surroundings. This was accomplished with military exactness and efficiency. Each one did his work on honor, so the task was finished quickly, and no one could have told that a group of school-girls and boys had been anywhere in the vicinity.

One thing which struck me with peculiar but forcible significance was that not a look of inspection was turned upon the camp-site by that wise director!

A long, extended fanlike column composed our forward advance. This woman led them from the center of the file. Slowly and in quiet but playful order we made our way to the schoolhouse. We reached there about three o'clock, and each one went straight to his desk.

I walked leisurely to the back of the room and stood leaning against a window-casing, that I might better view the re-establishment of order. As I looked above her desk at the front end of this school home I saw a large blue bunting banner upon which was tastily wrought, in white letters, the word, "SERVICE."

From my position I could see nothing but



that word in white. I went to different parts of the room, that I might secure a view of the banner from all angles, yet I could gain no spot within those four walls that was not dominated by the spirit of those seven white letters. Even with the woman-teacher sitting at her desk and in quiet manner showing the way to the girls and boys under the guidance of such a thought, still the word stood out above all else.

True, she illumined the whole room with her presence, but there was something of appeal in that combination of letters to which she did not aspire, I was sure!

Suddenly there broke forth a homecoming song entirely without direction, apparently, in softly vibrant tones that swelled into a wondrous harmony of full, rich quality as the young voices yielded to the spell of the occasion.

Just beneath the banner and hanging on the wall was the school bulletin board. A large space on this newsmonger was reserved for out-of-door announcements. Here rambles afield were tabulated, the probable distances given, the direction, and the object of the day's quest. Both the hour of the return and the number of the pupils making the tramp were carefully recorded before departure.

This daily bulletinizing of school activities was a source of great help to all visitors, as well as to those who sought pupils at dif-

ferent times with messages from home or elsewhere. Thereon were told when and where the next basketball game or baseball game was to be played—all carefully and neatly printed in most attractive lettering.

## CHAPTER XXXII

Nature cannot be antagonistic to man, seeing that man is a product of nature.—Liberty Hyde Bailey.

At the close of the song each child went to the blackboard and wrote out his story of the events of the day.

Since this director's first introduction to them she had talked about the efforts she expected would be put forth by each child who came to her for instruction. She taught them something about their individualities. She explained to them that each one was not expected to express himself like any other created thing, and that it would be her pleasure, as well as her duty, to lead each one as he seemed to require direction in order that his entire personality should be properly developed.

Because of such painstaking individual leadership, each put his own thoughts on the board that day in such expression as came from his conception of the day's effort. He told her and his schoolmates just what led him to select a weed, a shrub, a tree, a rock, or any other materials for his private consideration, and wrote out what he had to

say for all to view, that they might add such facts as were lacking in their own notebooks.

As those girls and boys applied themselves to the task in hand I noted the intense interest which pervaded the entire group. Each was wholly occupied with the expression of himself with a piece of chalk. I believe he realized that he was putting a portion of his individuality upon that blackboard.

She courted the freest giving of themselves in these tasks. Her girls and boys responded with a whole-heartedness that was amazing. And to finish up the performance creditably, she encouraged each one in representing by drawing just what characteristics he sought to hold up to the view of his fellows. When all was accomplished, she invited constructive criticism from each one who participated in the exercises.

She allowed no girl or boy to criticize anything on the board unless he were able to produce something as good or better than the effort upon which he intended to pass judgment. This routine practice pertained especially when any drawing were attempted.

In no instance did I note anyone undertake fun-making at the expense of another. Nor was there any effort on the part of a child in the room to exhibit any unusual talent of which he might be possessed in the placing of these daily observations on the board for the instruction of all. Evidently she had taught them to shun as they would a venom-

ous reptile any thought or expression discrediting the work of any schoolmate. She taught fair play in its fullest meaning in every walk of life!

In this wise each child was taught his English lesson, his spelling, his composition, much of his arithmetic, reading and geography, not to mention facts in geology, mineralogy, botany, zoology, physiology, and such other branches of science with which he came in contact every time he journeyed into the out-of-doors. All of this information came to him apparently without much of any effort when he became a harmoniously working piece of the great mechanism of Nature.

It required much patient direction on the part of this enthusiastic woman-leader to prove the worth of eyes and ears to her subjects. And their value came to each one as soon as he saw with his own eyes and heard with his own ears what transpired among his playmates. She made no attempt to convince them by argument; rather, she left the beautiful unfolding to its own time and in its own way, knowing well that the day must come, and shortly, when each one must be led into the full light of learning.

Every day in that schoolroom gave evidence of the arousing of every faculty of girl and boy to its wonderful expression. The mind, as well as the body, of each little enthusiast was employed to its utmost capacity

upon every tramp into the field of Nature outside of the schoolroom. She taught them as well that their studies of Nature could be carried on within doors, also, because she desired their development to be along the lines of wholeness. She told them that girls and boys were just as much a product of Nature as anything in sight the world over, and that each one demanded as close study and as careful consideration as did any flower or bird.

Seemingly not a thought of hers, not a wish, remained unsatisfied in this wide departure from the ordinary teaching routine. Her pupils surpassed her highest expectations after a few months of careful direction. Why? Just because she sought the expression of each one's individuality as she led it along the right path. So far as I was able to judge, no moment of her intercourse with her charges caused her any misgivings. Always they stepped forth into greater and greater light as she led them into apparently untrodden fields—and they never failed her!

The boy who had made the discovery of the new species of junco went to the board with as much confidence in his drawing and in his powers of description as he had exhibited in running that bird to earth. He drew an excellent likeness of the bird, and illustrated its special features in accurate colors. So true to life was this drawing that it called forth commendation from his director, who



gave him her only prize, a kindly look, a pleasing smile and an expression of sympathy with his undertaking that might have pleased a Michael Angelo.

All the tireless workers in this strangely industrious human hive were leaving their places at the blackboard as I made my adieus and passed out. They fell into line to a marching song, one that was brimming with youth, freedom and cheer, which rang out so clearly that I heard every word from my position a hundred or more feet away.

About an eighth of a mile distant I halted to look back toward that schoolhouse. I saw those happy pupils break up into jolly groups and start off toward their respective homes. They frolicked like a lot of scampering young animals; but with it all there was not the least sign of unusual boisterousness.

A few of the children lived in the same direction the teacher went, and always they accompanied her to her door. At times she would pass into her own home, remaining but a moment for a package, and then she went on with one or another, to spend the night at some home to which they looked for her coming as though she were a visitor from some other and distant world.

As they traversed the mile or two separating their homes from the little red schoolhouse, they went in an ideally human way, humming snatches of song or laughing gaily at someone's sally of wit.

My way was westward over a long stretch of desert to another station on another railroad, where I was to get the midnight train for home. Almost twenty miles across the open, rolling desert was before me, much of which was to be tramped in the night.

Just at a point on a slight ridge where I knew I would be able to see the schoolhouse once more, again I looked backward. I sought another view of her and her girls and boys. There they walked, the same happy ones I had left but a few minutes previously. I started to go forward, when the director's group faced about and waved toward me a most kindly salutation. That was all!

A perfect November day was just closing. Never before had I experienced one like it. I sought by every known means for a solution of this woman's power. Finally, as I stood gazing back through the waning light of that autumn afternoon, I realized she possessed an unusual naturalness in her treatment of the little charges and their everyday surroundings. She made each one realize that he was an inseparable portion of his immediate environment, and endeavored to teach him the value of the wisdom that was his when he lived his life in perfect harmony with all else surrounding him. He must love the common things about him and associate with them naturally, she said!

I was earnestly endeavoring to arrive at a definite conclusion as well as to acquaint

myself with the tangible results of the day's quest, when I was hailed by a voice at my elbow, saying, "What in the world be yuh a-doin' 'way out here an' alone? That's what I'd like ter know!"

## CHAPTER XXXIII

Such blessings Nature pours,  
O'erstocked mankind enjoys but half her stores.  
—Young, Love of Fame.

If a big timber wolf had growled a muffled "Woof!—woof!" at me I could not have been more startled.

The old friend who had greeted me so wonderingly put his hand in mine and said: "What yuh lookin' at over there?"

"I was saying good-bye to that old red schoolhouse and its rapidly disappearing director and her romping groups of girls and boys," I replied.

"Uh—huh—uhhh!" he grunted knowingly. "Bin over to learn suthin' from our won'erful schoolma'am, hain't yuh?"

"Isn't she a wonder, though!" I interjected. "Did you ever visit her school, Mr. Breckinridge?"

"Visit her school—huh! Ain't I one o' her board o' directors, I'd like ter know!" he answered a bit grandiloquently. "I shu'd say I hev! But, say, where'd she take yuh today?"

I did not answer him directly, but talked for a few minutes with him about the day I

had had with her and her charges, for I was anxious to be away and alone, so I excused myself and hurried forward. I called back to him that I had a long tramp to make to get a certain train, and that I must not tarry.

I know he wondered at my haste, but I was loath to speak to anyone just at that time. As I turned to secure my last view of her kingdom, my friend stood where I had left him so abruptly, staring in my direction. I waved my hand, and with head down set out toward the railroad station.

“Ain’t I one o’ her board o’ directors, I’d like ter know!” rang in my ears incessantly. The expression on the face of the man whom I had just left, as he proclaimed himself such an one, would not be eradicated from my mind as easily as I desired it might be. His puffed-up attitude struck me as one to be taken seriously, although at first I felt inclined to smile at his earnestness.

He seemed to feel that her methods of leadership in his school district demanded championship by himself in particular. That is the way his attitude impressed me—and yet what could this man say in defense of her innovations? He was the type of patron and school officer who believed wholly in an education founded upon the “Three R’s” of his boyhood.

I surmised that he encountered opposition in his district because of her departure from routine methods of leadership, and he expected to meet it when I addressed him con-

cerning her. But her case was proven so far as I was concerned, of course — she needed no champion!—and there appeared every probability that her cause had been won in this settlement, as a whole, because of the successes she had attained daily among these people. All her school patrons demanded was that their Susie and Mary and Tommy and Bob were being given the value of the money expended by the school district. They delighted in being shown that when any one of their sons and daughters went to high school he knew not only what was required of him in his entrance examinations, but that he had as well a vast store of knowledge that pupils from no other school in the state possessed.

The latter fact stood out significantly in every schoolroom into which one of her eighth-graders went. Her girls and boys were so generally well informed that it became an adage in the high schools of that portion of the state, which one heard hourly: "If you don't know it, ask someone from the old red schoolhouse—he'll tell you!"

Superintendents, principals, teachers and friends alike made opportunities to get her pupils on their feet in the classroom, before groups of girls and boys or audiences of all kinds, that they might hear them express themselves in their characteristic manner concerning the out-of-doors. Whenever any question concerning the truth of what was being said or read in a schoolroom came up



for settlement, the teacher invariably referred the matter to one of the pupils from the old red schoolhouse. Perhaps it was concerning a shower of rain which was deluging them at that particular instant; or the cause of the velocity of the wind driving against the building; the elucidation of frost-pictures on the window-panes; the inimitable song of some bird awakening the echoes around them; the life habits of some wild creature which had been killed near by—it mattered not how difficult the question regarding natural phenomena, each child of her tutelage could talk intelligently about it.

Many questions arose at each springtime during the planting season, at harvest time, or later in the autumn, when the time for gathering all crops had arrived, which never before had been asked other pupils for explanation; but her girls and boys readily and gladly and wholly without ostentation told of the wonders going on every instant, and exhibited an intimacy with Nature hitherto unremarked among them.

This director had so related every individual with his every-day environment that it was impossible for him not to be informed concerning it. Intimate acquaintanceship with the child's home and school locality, its normal coloring, its definite make-up, its harmonious beauty, and how he reacted in its presence was what she demanded from her adherents—and she got it!

Upon these things I meditated as I

tramped across the trackless desert that night. Did a welcome lamplight ever shine more or less brilliantly away in the distance, when you were off on such a tour, giving you a wavering invitation ever forward? Often it led you into narrow, shallow arroyos from which its flickering beacon was no longer visible. Then you felt lost entirely! Thus such a light treated me until I had gained the homeward side, when again that intermittent spot of radiance became my guiding star. For miles and miles this tramp led me forward that night, with no apparent lessening of the distance separating me from the railroad station.

Even desert trails find an ending, a stopping place, in time. So it was with the one I trod upon that occasion. And as I strode into the tiny shelter named a station, where one did one's own train-flagging, with but two or three dilapidated structures bearing it lonely company, I had but a scant half-hour to await the coming of my train. These few minutes I gave over to meditating upon the day and the teachings which had been brought home so forcibly to me.

Early afternoon found me at home, wondering what the Wades and the Watsons were doing, and if any new features had been added to their equipment since my departure three days previously. When I opened the morning mail there was one letter which bore the postmark of the rural settlement where

Tom Wade's family posted their letters—and at once I was in touch with them.

I failed to recognize the superscription, however, and while I was anxious to read the letter instantly, I laid it aside until the last, that I might accord to it the time I felt sure was its due. It seemed as though that letter, lying face up on my desk, had something important to say to me. Still I studied it and allowed it to remain unopened.

So it was nearly an hour before I was ready to give myself up wholly to the contents of that unread epistle. I cut the envelope slowly and with exaggerated deliberation that I might hold longer in anticipation what I felt eventually would be mine—just as I might have done with a letter from a distant, long-ago sweetheart—and then I took the folded sheet from within its cover and gently undid it.

“November 10, 19—.

“Dear friend:

“Ma an Clarissy an me hev bin plannin a sprise fer the Watsons an you when you come over to our house fer Thanksgiving dinner an we want you to help us jist a little. I haint had the old gun out of the house sence that last time when you seen me on the desert fer jacks. We've put up a lot of houses fer the birds an a feedin house an a shelter you call it an a pretty good place fer the birds to drink out of. Ma and Clarissy jist thought tother day mebbe after dinner on Thanksgiving day we cud all go

over to the old school house an invite a lot of the ranchers round here an have some speeches an some music an mebbe we might put up a bird box on some of the old trees round the school. Wont that be great fun? Pa says we'd like to have you stop here soon an we kin talk about it.

“Your friend,

“JOHN WADE.”

## CHAPTER XXXIV

To the solid ground  
Of Nature trusts the Mind that builds for aye.  
—Wordsworth.

A letter from Johnny Wade! There it lay on my desk, looking up at me and signed, "Your friend, John Wade."

Gun-Grabbing Johnny in a new role surely.

What had prompted the boy's letter, I wondered. I was certain it was but one thing. Johnny was wise beyond his years. He realized that he was not cutting a very active figure around his newly cleaned-up home with its ranch environment.

Clarissa was enveloped in a "smoke barrage" those days, so far as he was concerned. His younger sister Martha trailed a close second to the eldest girl, while their mother worked silently at their elbows, glad of the newly-awakened interest they manifested in this effort toward conservation of the wild birds.

Sally Wade realized that such activities added much to the production of their acres. The visits to Jim Watson's "Paradise" home had taught her more than she admitted to anyone but herself. When the children were

away at school on weekdays, and she was able to walk about the yards and out into the fields with her three-year-old boy clinging tightly to one or more fingers, she gave herself over to castle-building of the earthly type.

Amanda Watson's home, with its cool, airy porch, on the hot July days when she had first visited there, had made an unusual appeal to her womanly sense of comfort and cheer. She recognized that the extraordinary claims made by the Watsons that all they had accumulated was due to their consideration of the wild-life in their immediate vicinity, was scarcely true in the main.

She talked the matter over with her toddling son, for they were alone many hours at a time, and always he agreed with her. No matter how she expressed herself as she talked her thoughts out loud to him, he was an eager, courteous listener, and most agreeably anxious to aid her. He was her one confidant in matters relating to co-operative farming with wild-life assistants, co-operators, co-sharers of the gross products of the ranch, as well as co-enjoyers of the fruits of their labors.

Mrs. Wade had farmed long enough to know that shrewd Jim Watson and his family of assistants used every available agent to secure the very best results annually. She noted that he housed his machinery of all types carefully; that he used his irrigation water sparingly, that his crops might not be



drowned out and his land become waterlogged; that he planted only the highest-test seeds each year; that his work was "caught-up" on the farm in all seasons, and that his fences were well made, strongly set and carefully guarded.

Good management stared her in the face every time she set foot on "Paradise" ranch or when she recalled her visits there in her mind's eye. She turned to the boy one day and said: "One of the best stunts Jim Watson pulls off, son, is that he's wise 'nuff to git the birds to help 'im!"

"Uh-huh!" smilingly cooed the baby.

"Course yuh'd say that, 'coz yuh allus 'gree with mother, don't yuh?" she answered to the boy's reply. And she caught the lovable youngster up in her arms and squeezed him until he squealed with delight.

I came upon her in one of those two-actor soliloquies the next Thursday afternoon, before her girls and boys had returned from school.

She was out in the corral behind the barn, planning some new venture which she admitted might add to the comfort of the stock during the coming winter, as well as make the work easier for her husband and her boys, when the wind and snow came swirling upon them from the open desert not far off.

Wholly unknown to her, I had made a tour of the place before I ventured to show myself about the house and yards. I had made myself acquainted with every addition that

had been made since my last visit, weeks before. Yet I was not prepared for some of the new accessories that had been set up near the old house and among the fast-dying trees that still remained upright and partly green in the orchard.

There stood in the only alluring spot in the orchard a real up-to-the-minute cement bird-bath!

The design was a new one to me, and perhaps as new to the birds as it was to its makers; for I dare say no feathered friend east or west ever beheld such uniqueness in a combined bird-bath and drinking fountain in any of its tours.

It stood about six feet high. A twenty-four inch square tray composed the bath proper. At its edges it was not more than an inch in depth. The floor sloped to a sounding of two inches in the center. While the framework was square, the interior of the basin was rounded so that all corners were disposed of and no unnecessary accumulations of any sort could befoul the water.

This lavatory was supported solidly by four spreading two-inch-square uprights which came together at the bottom and were set firmly in a well designed square base, and smoothed off and rounded harmoniously where curves in no wise detracted from the general sculptured effect. Each of these angled legs was attached to a corner of the receptacle, well bedded in the cement, making a splendid union at each juncture.

The supports were attached far enough away from the edge of the tray to show overhanging eaves, sufficient to warrant protection to what was inserted just below the bath. Here was the unique fixture of the piece.

Nicely set in between the diverging up-rights was a partly housed-in cover which afforded ample space for a feeding device of unusual attractiveness. The opening of this food shelter was toward the south, where it guaranteed the maximum amount of sunlight in the winter months as well as permitted the least possible exposure to winds.

Just beneath the lunchroom nestled a community birdhouse which would accommodate four bird families at once!

Never before had I seen such ingenuity exhibited in the making of an accessory for wild birds. Home, food and water all the round year. What more could bird-life desire?

“Well, how d’ yuh like it?” a voice at my elbow queried. Of course it was Mrs. Wade, but as I stood in speechless amazement I had forgotten her presence entirely—I was unprepared for remarks of any kind.

I rubbed my eyes, blinked a few unseeing stares at her, and mumbled incoherently: “I wasn’t looking for such a surprise. Who—who made it?”

“The hull Wade fambly, brother!” exclaimed the cheery voice of Tom Wade, who

had joined us in time to hear my question to his wife. "And ain't it a beauty?"

The farmer had come in from a far field for a drink of fresh water. He had been plowing all day, and thinking that he ought to give the mares a rest for a half-hour, he had strolled homeward for refreshment.

"Yes," Mrs. Wade smilingly interjected, "it's the work uv all on us. After we'd seen what the Watsons had over to 'Paradise,' we all got together an' made up our minds we'd beat 'em in some way 'f we c'u'd—an' here it is!"

"It is the most original mechanism I ever looked at, I assure you," I replied, "and when all departments are in full blast, what a busy spot this will be!"

"Here come the children on a gallop," called out Wade. "Jist see 'em come, will yuh!"

As usual, Clarissa's long legs and greater speed enabled her to beat Johnny in the race for home, and she landed beside us with a whoop and a yell which would have done credit to frontier Indian maidens of earlier days. Her brother hurried on but a few rods behind her, red in the face and panting hard after a long stern chase over the fields across lots from school.

Both greeted me quietly, wonderingly, evidently expecting me to comment upon their latest acquisition in the field of wild-life conservation.

"Johnny had the most to do with gittin'

it up," declared Clarissa before anyone else could say a word.

"Yes, but pa an' ma an' you, too, helped jist 's much as I did!" exclaimed the boy, still breathing hard from his recent effort. "An' 'twan't all my plan, nuther."

## CHAPTER XXXV

I think that I shall never see  
A poem lovely as a tree.  
A tree whose hungry mouth is prest  
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;  
A tree that looks at God all day,  
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;  
A tree that may in summer wear  
A nest of robins in her hair;  
Upon whose bosom snow has lain;  
Who intimately lives with rain.  
Poems are made by folks like me,  
But only God can make a tree.

—Joyce Kilmer.

“Tom told yuh we all had a hand a-makin’ that air contraption,” laughed Mrs. Wade, “an’ I fer one am awfully glad we done it.”

“Ye-uh!” quietly assented the farmer, stooping to smooth off a corner of the cement base. “It took a hull lot o’ figurin’ an’ plan-nin’ to git the thing as we wanted it; but she’s done an’ sot up, an’ we’re all mighty proud o’ our job—hain’t we, Johnny?”

“Yuh—betcha!” stoutly declared the boy.

There appeared to be an unusual expression upon the farmer’s face just at that instant, one of deep sincerity—perfect confidence in the outcome of the effort he was fathering. Never before had I observed such



earnestness of purpose upon his sunny countenance.

"Yuh see," continued Johnny, "we all thought we jist had to hev suthin' diffrent from them nice things Jimmy Watson's got over to his place; so we got at it an' done this. An'—an' we didn't want it like no other fixin' we'd ever heerd tell on!"

Still another role in which Gun-Grabbing Johnny was playing lead!

Boys are strange creatures. Their big, resourceful imaginations successfully overcome all obstacles—for a time at least!—and for them the sun always shines, the weather is ever fair and the sky revels in an unwonted blue.

Such intense activity as they manifest throughout their lives as boys is never met in any other type of animal. Adaptability is their stock in trade. Untiring persistency along one line gains ends they seek for days and weeks together. One wonders much at the variety of means they will employ to gain a coveted goal—and then how unflinchingly they will desert the cause for some new creature of their imaginations—if it be for the furtherance of their plans.

Gun-Grabbing Johnny starred before every audience—sometimes in a barnstorming way, to be sure; yet he had the knack of making his part stand out brilliantly as he walked through his lines. To accomplish this the boy often mixed comedy and tragedy; quite happily, too, much to the joy and amusement

of his intimates, yet often to his own discomfiture.

Even Clarissa, his born antagonist, proudly gave way to the lad when he assumed the role of dictator. He had a brave little heart which beat true underneath his bluff exterior and his sister acknowledged its masterful impulse, as she many times played second to his lead. Often she made a big fuss about giving in to him, but usually Johnny stood his ground so firmly that at first she leaned toward him, then tottered a bit unsteadily, and finally succumbed to his steadiness of purpose.

"We was jist bound to hev a bird-bath this year, an' no matter if 'tis so late," Clarissa declared anxiously, "an' when we got at it Johnny thought uv one thin' an' another 'till we was able to git this together. Yuh see, the little 'partment house fer the birds, down under the feedin' place, is more'n four foot from the ground, so's nothin' kin git to the birds when they come to live in it."

"We're gittin' rid uv all the cats on the place, too, 's fast as we kin, so there won't be none 'round next summer ter try ter git the birds when they make their nests," hastily put in Johnny. "That's why we put the little house under there an' so low down."

"Do not be disappointed if the birds fail to build in your little mansion the first year," I suggested to them, "for new quarters are not always acceptable to their tastes. Sometimes the right pair does not come along for

years. Yet I have seen bluebirds, for instance, so anxious to move into a new house that was being set up for them that they would start to housekeeping before the carpenters had finished putting the roof on.

"Did yuh see them bluebird boxes we put up out in the orchard?" questioned Johnny.

"Yes," I responded, "I came through that way a little while ago, and stopped to admire them. You chose the locations very wisely, my boy, and hanging them by wires from a tree limb makes them all the more certain of occupancy the first season. As a rule English sparrows do not favor a hanging house, so you may not be annoyed by their meddling in the household affairs of your bluebird guests when they come next spring."

"Won't that be jist lovely!" cried little Martha, as she danced up and down. "I wish 'twas spring right now!"

"It'll be here long afore we're ready fer it," said Tom Wade to his daughter, "fer 'tain't winter yit."

"I wish yuh hadn't cut down them ole trees fer firewood a year er two ago, Tom," said Mrs. Wade. "They stood so clos't to the house they'd be fine now fer a place to put a feedin' shelter in fer the birds this winter."

"Never mind, Sally," replied the farmer. "We'll set out a hull lot o' fruit an' nut trees nex' spring, fer I jist left a order fer 'em t'other day when we was in town. 'Twon't



FIG. 24. Thimble Berry (*Berberis Fremontii*), Called "Wee-umps" by the Paiuti Indians. It is the autumn food for many birds.



FIG. 25. Squawberries in Little Cottonwood Canyon, Near Salt Lake City, January 26, 1918.



FIG. 26. Nest, Unhatched Egg, and Two Young of Pied-Billed Grebes.



take long to grow good ones ag'in, an' when we got 'em ag'in we'll keep 'em, I tell yuh!"

"What kind yuh goin' ter set out, pa?" inquired Johnny.

"Them nurserymen says we kin grow English walnuts, black walnuts an' butter-nuts out here on the desert, an' git good crops, too, after they begin bearin'," answered the father. "An' we'll hev a lot of cherries an' plums an' apples an' pears, too. An' while they're gittin' big we'll set out some kind o' fast-growin' shade trees fer a little shade afore the fruit an' nut trees git big. Then we'll cut the shade trees out fer wood an' hev lots o' fruit an' nut trees left fer years to come—see?"

"Yuh betcha we will!" exclaimed Johnny most interestedly.

"I think a few black English mulberry trees would add much to your selection, Tom, and give the birds a great quantity of berries all summer," I urged.

"That's so! I plum forgot 'em!" replied the farmer. "Jist the fust time I go to town I'll tell 'em to put some o' them trees in my order."

"There are many varieties of ornamental trees you can set out around the house and in the yards that will furnish much food for the birds all the autumn and well on into the winter, if you care to plant them," I suggested. "The mountain ash, three or four species of the hawthorn, barberry, bearberry, service berry, boxelder, white ash, pines, firs



and spruce, as well as such shrubs as privet, all the domestic edible berries, roses, black elder, cornels, and many others. The Virginia creeper, clematis and honeysuckle make wonderfully attractive coverings for house and porch as well as afford great quantities of berries for the birds in the winter season."

"Come on, dad—let's git the chores done an' then we kin talk over them things at supper," suggested Johnny.

"Sure we kin, son," hurriedly answered his father. Then he turned to me and said: "You stay to supper, an' while we're doin' up the chores yuh kin look 'round er go in the house an' talk with the wimmen folks. We've got lots ter talk about, hain't we, Johnny?"

"Uh—huh!" called back the boy as he started on a run for the corral.

On my way into the house I could not help noticing the great number of improvements on every hand. A new porch replaced the old one. Tattered screen doors had given way to new ones which had been carefully painted and hung with great precision. They did not slam like the old ones when one passed through into the house; they had noiseless closers fitted to them!

Martha and the smaller boy had remained outside with me when the mother and Clarissa went in to prepare the simple evening meal. As I stepped on to the porch I was greeted with the hospitable odors of the kitchen and dining room. Delectable fumes

were wafted toward me as I bathed my face and hands in readiness for supper. Martha and her brother commented loquaciously upon the smell of goodies that came to us from within doors, entertaining me while I bathed.

Clarissa was full of questions relating to the subject that nowadays was nearest to her heart. She quizzed me about my trip to the far part of the state, and when I in turn began to seek information concerning the Thanksgiving Day exercises she laughingly called out to me: "Them's Johnny's plans, an' you'll hev to talk to him 'bout 'em!"

"Supper's 'bout ready, Clarissy," said the mother, as she came in from the kitchen with a big dish of steaming hot potatoes and a large platter of ham and eggs.

Clarissa romped to the outer room and quickly returned with a plate heaped high with hot biscuits in one hand while the other grasped a fat glass pitcher filled with creamy milk.

"Marthy, you go call the men folks to supper!" called out the mother.

Instantly I heard the childish voice raised in that welcome call: "Su-up-per! Come to supper!"

## CHAPTER XXXVI

Nature seems to wear one universal grin.

—Henry Fielding.

Johnny's fat, rosy cheeks bulged big, like a pocket gopher's! His eyes gazed poppingly at me from across the supper table. He was hurriedly engaged in an effort to fill up his emptiness before he undertook the burden of the conversation.

I saw a huge bite of creamy biscuit disappear, a piled-high knifeful of mashed potatoes slipped out of sight, and then a piece of juicy ham quick-stepped in the wake of the other goodies. He swallowed hurriedly, anxiously and with difficulty. By and by he had stowed away enough food to stimulate him sufficiently to begin the divulgence of his plans to me. His first step was a very diplomatic one.

"Say, dad," he called to his father, "c'u'dn't we hev Thanksgiving' dinner 'long 'bout noon——"

"I don't know, my son," laughingly responded the farmer before the boy could finish his question. "Yuh'll hev to ast mother 'bout the dinner hour, 'coz yuh know that ain't none o' my affairs."

“What do yuh want it so early fer, Johnny?” asked his mother in a kindly tone. “Yuh know we allus eat dinner ’bout three o’clock on holidays.”

There was another forced swallow, then a hasty bite out of a golden-brown egg which had been sandwiched cozily in the center of a thick biscuit, and a big swallow of water washed this forcibly downward before Johnny attempted to answer his mother. Even then his voice was husky and he was obliged to reach for another drink before he could enunciate distinctly.

“Yuh know”—swallow—“we got ter git”—swallow—“done in time ter hev them exercises at the schoolhouse I’ve been plannin’ fer, hain’t we?” demanded the boy.

“My son, don’t yuh think yuh’d better wait ’till yuh git through eatin’ afore yuh try ter talk?” suggested his mother. “Yer plans ’ll keep ’till then, I reckon, won’t they?”

“I’m all through now, ma,” insisted Johnny.

“Might jist ’s well let ’im talk, mother,” quietly interposed the father, as the boy showed signs of irritability. Then the farmer turned to me and said “He’s so full, Johnny is, o’ this ’ere subjiect he jist can’t wait fer nothin’. That’s all he’s been thinkin’ ’bout fer weeks!”

Just at that moment I poured a little oil on the troubled family waters by saying to the over-zealous youngster: “Aren’t you

going to tell me about your plans for Thanksgiving Day celebration?"

"I'll tell yuh 'bout 'em!" exclaimed Clarissa, "but——"

"No, yuh won't nuther," declared the boy. "I'll tell 'im myself, an' you jist don't say nothin', Clarissy."

"Now, Clarissy, this 's Johnny's show," the father urged, "an' he'll tell us all 'bout it when he gits ready; won't yuh, son?"

"Yuh—betcher—life I will!" insisted the boy. "I been won'erin' fer a long time jist how ter do the thing, an' terday it come ter me. I'm a-goin' ter ast the teacher t' tell the kids at school that we're goin' ter hev some doin's fer the birds, and sing bird songs an' tell bird stories, an' mebbe—mebbe we kin hev a little bird play. The kids 'll tell all o' their folks, and then, when all the boys an' girls take part, it sure will bring out lots o' pepul. Yuh know it's a holiday fer them two days, an' there won't be no school, an' pa's one o' the d'reckters, an' we'll ast him 'f we can't hev the schoolhouse fer the afternoon."

"I guess that kin be fixed up all right, Johnny," admitted his father.

"An' we'll hev ter begin 'bout three o'clock, an' it'll be a s'prise to the Watsons 'till we start fer the schoolhouse. Then they won't know what's goin' on, an' when we git there I'll jist ast Jimmy (er hev teacher ast 'im) an' his father, too, to make a speech!" proudly revealed this young plotter.

"That will be splendid, Johnny," I said to him. "I am certain the Watsons will do all in their power to aid you and your cause. But what a surprise it will be for them, won't it? They'll have much to say for the birds and what the little fellows have done for them. Why, Mr. Wade, we'll need the entire afternoon, and a portion of the evening as well, in order to hear all the good things these youngsters will want to say about the birds," I added, turning to the farmer.

"Stay as long as yuh like—it don't make no diffrence how long it takes 's long as all o' them kids has a chancet ter say their say," insisted Tom Wade. "It'll sure be some Thanksgivin' Day celebration;—won't it, though?"

"The very best program for such a day I ever heard of," I answered. "There is no character of life to which we owe so much as we do to the wild feathered things that sing around our doors. It is most appropriate to honor them on this day of all days in the year on which we attempt to show a little appreciation for the bounty of Mother Earth. I wonder that no one ever thought of it before. Do you think your neighbors will be glad to join you in such an effort?"

"Well, everyone 'round here's heerd how beautiful 'tis over to 'Par'dise,' an' some hev seen the Watson place, an' me an' Johnny an' the folks hev been tellin' all 'bout what we've done; so I guess we'll hev a awjence all right," declared Clarissa.



“What is your part in this Thanksgiving Day program, Clarissa? Surely you ought to make a speech or tell the girls and boys how to make all the wonderful fixtures mother and father and you and Johnny have made and set up about your own home,” I hazarded as the girl told us about the great interest that had been created in their part of the township.

“Clarissy ’ll be sure in it, all right, all right!” affirmed Johnny. “Fer hain’t she heluped me lots, an’ wasn’t it her what first tried ter git Jimmy Watson ter tell us all ’bout their place an’ show us how ter make all o’ them air things? Huh, I sh’u’d say she would be in them exercises!”

A very versatile, leading person was this same Gun-Grabbing Johnny, to be sure!

Every member of the Wade family sat up until late that evening talking about the Thanksgiving Day program and the visitors the day would bring to their home. The day was less than two weeks off, and the excitement ran high. And when mother and father began to mention bedtime, there was no one in the house to whom the “sand-man” had sent in his mighty summons.

I spent the night with these friends in order to aid them as much as possible in their plans for the coming celebration. It was their desire to establish this custom among the ranchers in their little valley, and they wanted some advice concerning proper procedure to accomplish all they had planned.

Every room in the house sheltered more than one occupant, so I could hear subdued voices until a late hour. I knew each one was discussing the all-important day and its many details.

Long before the usual early-rising hour of that household the next morning I could hear the scampering of little feet and hoarse whisperings outside my room door in the hall. The thickness of the old adobe walls interfered with my hearing what was said, but I understood enough to learn of their intense interest in the cause of the birds. In a little while I heard someone moving about downstairs, and that seemed to be a signal for the youngsters to start the day's activities.

"We will, too!" I heard Clarissa say in great excitement.

"I betcha yuh we will!" answered Johnny. And then he laughed with all the might of his young body.

"I mean we won't!" parried his sister. Evidently she had said something she had not meant to say, for great outbursts of laughter and merriment resounded from one room to the other as they proceeded with their dressing.

I could hear Johnny laughing and scolding in a good-natured way as he hurriedly donned his clothes. Clarissa threatened him with dire punishment of some sort as soon as she got him well on his way to school if he did not stop "laughin' at me!"

"Yuh know what I meant ter say, Johnny

Wade," I heard her call across the passage to him. "An' yuh know I'm right; now, hain't I?"

"Hurry up, Johnny! Them horses an' cows an' pigs want some water an' feed jist 's quick 's yuh kin git down to the barn," sang out Tom Wade from the foot of the stairs.

"Yessir! Comin'!" yelled the boy, and raced for the bottom.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

Nothing in Nature, much less conscious being,  
was e'er created solely for itself. —Young.

The Wade children extended to me an urgent invitation to visit their school that morning, to trudge along with them across the desert as soon as breakfast was over. Clarissa and Johnny confided to me that there was much about which they wished to talk on our way there, so they thought it would be best for me to accompany them.

True to her word, Clarissa took after her brother Johnny as soon as we were at a safe distance from the house, and she announced her attack in a whooping staccato which started the boy off on the run of his life: "I tole yuh I'd git even with yuh, didn't I?" she yelled, as she made a dive for him.

Johnny doubled in his tracks like a jack-rabbit teasing a coyote. His ruse was short-lived, however, for the girl made a quick turn and twist, and nabbed him just as he fell headlong over a bunch of sagebrush. Then she rolled over him and rubbed his head and face in the desert sand, all the time laughing and screaming at the top of her

voice, until the boy broke away and scrambled to his feet.

Again he sought safety in flight, but the swift-footed girl had him within a few yards and toppled him over the sagebrush as she would have bowled over a ten-pin. Johnny took all of this abuse in splendid good nature, although he was getting the worst of the encounter from every point of attack, knowing well that he gained most when he kept his temper.

As soon as the girl believed she had gotten "even" with her brother, they brushed the dust off their clothes and joined us, laughing heartily. All of us enjoyed the rough-and-tumble merriment hugely, but we were glad when Clarissa admitted having satisfied her cravings for a chance to expend some early-morning energy.

At once each one began to ask questions concerning some of the proposed features of their coming celebration. I hinted for a reason for the late sisterly attack, but neither volunteered an answer, so I was obliged to give up any hope of sharing their secret with them.

Their queries concerning the details of their program were of minor importance and were soon answered. I advised them relative to the best form of address with which to approach their teacher in order to insure her co-operation with them. The fact that this district had a woman incumbent made it easier to secure aid for them in their plans.

I was positive she would be in sympathy with them, for the majority of women are glad of the opportunity to lend their energies to constructive effort if a proper appreciation of their capacities be evidenced.

We entered the schoolroom just as the first bell rang. Clarissa and Johnny stated the object of my visit in the same breath. The young woman smiled indulgently upon them as she shook hands with me and listened intently until each one had made his wants known.

She was interested greatly! Instead of waiting for the five minutes to elapse before the second bell was rung, she asked the proud little fellow who acted as her aide so charmingly to sound the second call.

The unusualness of this procedure brought every youngster attending school on a rush for his place in the ranks. He wasn't going to miss anything by being tardy!

All were bristling with inquisitiveness. Freshly washed faces shone with an unknown brilliancy. Eager, sparkling eyes flashed questioning glances from one to another as they marched into the one big room. Clarissa and Johnny were the center of attraction because it had been whispered about that these children had told the teacher something, evidently of importance.

Clarissa was asked to tell the school what was in preparation. With all the grace of a duchess she waved the opportunity aside and responded: "No, ma'am. The plan is



Johnny's, an' I don't think I'd oughta say anythin' 'bout it. Let him tell the school, teacher, please."

I dared not look at the boy. I felt his eyes boring me through and through, but I was intently watching the play of the early morning light on the clouds far away! Pretty soon I heard the childish voice raised in utterance of the one great thought of his life—to tell the girls and boys of his own school district that he no longer believed in killing the birds and other helpful creatures which, as he admitted, demanded his protection because of their worth to his father, to Jimmy Watson's father, and to every other father in the community.

He related stammeringly what he thought about the plan for a celebration of a new kind on Thanksgiving Day. He said it was to be an entertainment for the "hull de-strick," and that his father had promised to see the other school directors and secure the schoolhouse for the afternoon of Thanksgiving Day, if all of the families in the district could get through with their dinners in time to "git ter school" and hear the program.

He finished his maiden speech after this fashion: "How many o' you kids 'll help git up a fine program that'll tell everybody what comes what the birds an' other things is doin' fer us all the time? All on us kin sing a little; can't we, teacher? And Clarissy an' me know one er two songs that'll be fine ter sing fer sich a day, an' all on us kin

learn 'em; can't we? All's goin' in fer this jist give the school yell!"

Every tot in the schoolroom stood on his feet and gave forth a lusty school yell that made the teacher smile her broadest, while I experienced a mistiness before my eyes which was unusual, I assure you.

Then the boy sat down, blushed a vivid crimson and hid himself behind a big book he had grabbed from his desk.

Nothing could stop those keenly alert youngsters from turning about in their seats and commenting to each other upon what they had heard—and that very wise little woman-teacher never interfered with their expression of deep interest. She turned and asked me to supplement Johnny's remarks, giving his plan more in detail, because the scared boy had forgotten to mention many important points. Then she herself talked quietly and impressively upon the subject so recently broached, and her every remark commanded the liveliest attention.

When I took my departure, a few minutes afterward, I had heard nearly every pupil in the schoolroom pledge himself to enact some feature on that Thanksgiving Day program.

I made my way back to the Wade ranch to tell the mother of the scene I had witnessed in their little rural schoolhouse. It was my special privilege to express to her my appreciation of her efforts with her very much alive boy Johnny.

Tears filled her eyes as I related the effect her boy's speech had upon the pupils. Great motherly tears welled over on to her cheeks as she pictured to herself her boy standing up in such a cause before girls and boys to whom it had been not only his practice, but his pleasure as well, to brag about the killing of one kind or another of wild creatures which inhabited the region round about them, ever since he had been old enough to swing a club or shoot a gun.

We talked a little while about the more general program for the day, and agreed with each other that no one should say a word to the Watsons or to anyone living near them about the plans her family had originated. She was most anxious that the surprise her boy had in store for the Watson family should be carried out to the letter.

I took a short cut across the fields that I might visit for a moment with Tom Wade where he was plowing on the far side of the ranch. I wanted to let him know that I had visited the school as well as to tell him a bit of my experience while there. He was sitting on his plowbeam, resting at the end of a round, when I came upon him. His face illumined wonderfully as I approached, and I seemed to be able to read thereon the wonders that Jim Watson's "Paradise" had worked on the man.

"Did yuh go clean over to school with 'em—did yuh?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes, I did; and I had a few minutes of



FIG. 27. Nest of Meadow Lark.

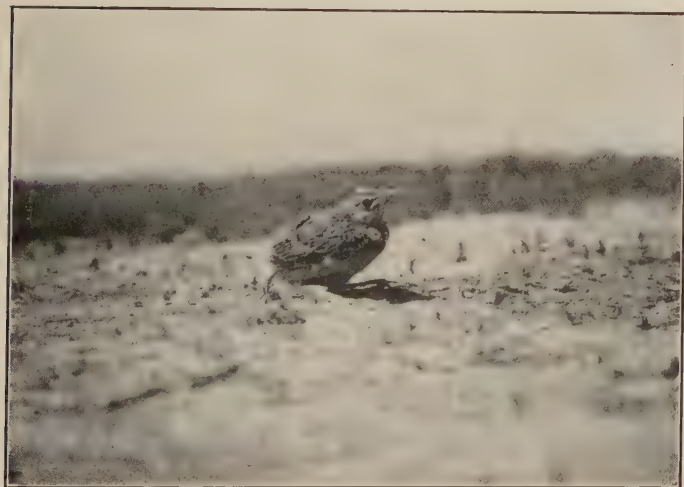


FIG. 28. Young Meadow Lark.

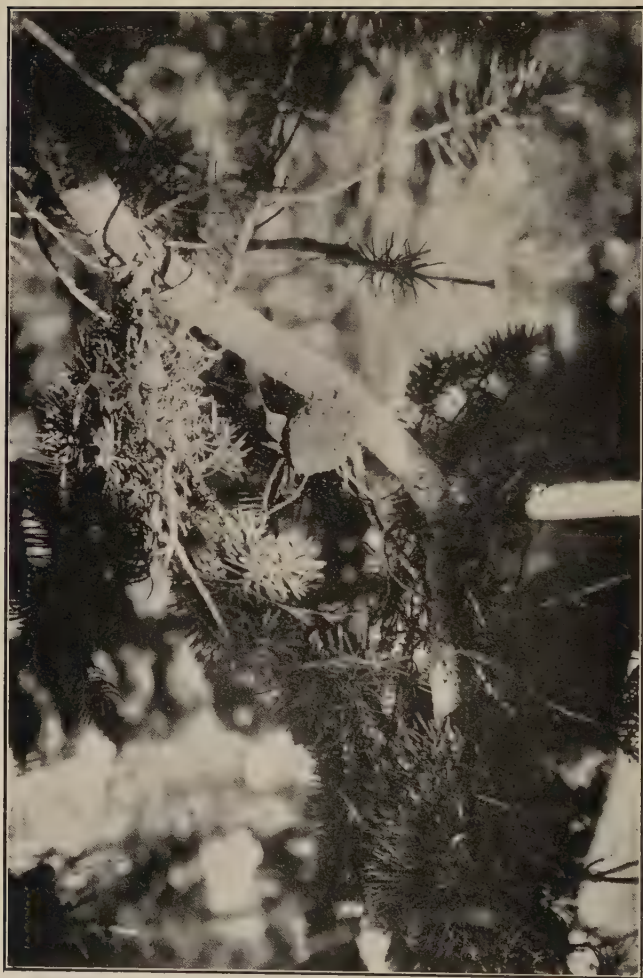


FIG. 29. Female Square-tailed Humming Bird on Nest.



very great pleasure while in that old school-room," I replied. "You have a woman-teacher of the right sort in your district, Tom; one that would enjoy being cultivated by your family, and one who would profit much by such contact. Her acquaintance would be invaluable to you and to yours, and she is capable of adding much to the pleasure of life in your household, as well as in all others."

"She's all right, is she; an' do yuh think Johnny's plan'll work all right?" he queried anxiously.



## CHAPTER XXXVIII

And we, with Nature's heart in tune,  
Concerted harmonies.

—William Motherwell.

“Tom, if you could have heard your Johnny’s speech to his schoolmates,” I answered, “probably his very first effort; and then could you have witnessed the hearty response to his vigorous appeal for entertainers on his Thanksgiving Day program, you would have no misgivings regarding the success of the boy’s plans. Why, every kiddie in the room stood and shouted out his approval of the scheme when Johnny called for the school yell in his support, just as though they had been a group of baseball fans voting against the umpire!”

“Did the boy make a speech, a—a—re’ly, trooly speech?” quizzed the farmer. Then a smile spread over his face that stopped not at his ears, but went on around the back of his neck, met, crossed over, and came rolling forward from opposite sides, calling into life and being every wrinkle in the sunburned physiognomy that beamed upon me. “What did-die say?”

The serio-comic expression on the farmer’s

face set me off into a joyous laugh in which the puzzled man joined half-heartedly as he said: "Whach yuh-all laffin' at, I'd like ter know?"

"Nothing, Tom — nothing," I evaded. "Only your face looked as though you were going to have a fit."

He arose from his seat on the plow, threw his shoulders back as far as they would go, pulled his hat brim down over his eyes tightly, and declared: "Ef that boy Johnny done all that, he sure means bizness. An' he tole 'em all what he'd like ter hev 'em do, eh? Well, I'll be durned!"

"No doubt about the boy's earnestness," I hastened to assure him, for the rancher again sat down upon his plow-beam, dropped his head into his hands and hunched himself up as though he were going to take a nap.

In a moment I heard a smothered reiteration of, "Well, I'll be durned!" escape from his lips. And then, as he finished his meditations, he added, "Who'd a-thunk it!"

I did not ask to share the secret of his soliloquy, yet I felt positive I could forecast the father's feelings as he thought of the change of heart that had come to his boy in the few short months since cherry time.

Johnny was a chip of the old block. He had been tutored in the old-time school and under the leadership of a father who dared do anything in his community except break the law. At that he balked. But he had led the men and boys of all ages on all sorts

of hunting expeditions for many kinds of large and small game—always with the virile teaching that it was their right to kill everything that ran, flew or crawled!

Once more the father stood up, shook himself vigorously, and volunteered: "The boy got that from his mother. When we was fust married she allus tole me 'twan't right ter kill the birds an' sich critters. She said her mother tole her so, an' so did her gran'-mother, an' we had many a tiff 'bout it' till she give up at last when I said the birds et up all our crops. An' now won't she be tickled to death 'coz Johnny's leadin' the school ter save her ole fr'en's, the birds?"

"All the cause needs in your valley at present is the biggest boost the Wade family can give it," I suggested to him as I walked away.

I had gone but a little distance on my way homeward when I heard a loud call: "Oh, it'll git it all right, all right. Yuh needn't be afeerd!"

With that sort of a promise ringing in my ears, I sought the nearest road—one which would get me home as quickly as possible.

I made frequent trips to the Wade ranch during the next ten days in order to lend my services to Clarissa and Johnny in perfecting a program. I attended more than one rehearsal in which the young woman-teacher directed the efforts of her girls and boys toward the completion of a satisfactory

entertainment for that desert countryside.

At the dress rehearsal I was startled to have the big feature of the performance set before me. It was indeed a surprise! One that had been kept from me even; only the schoolgirls and boys taking part had been allowed to share his confidence; and as the old stained cloth, which served as a curtain at the end of the schoolhouse, swung back from before its improvised stage, I could not refrain from expressing my complete amazement.

There was Johnny's little bird play being staged right in front of me, and I sat in open-mouthed astonishment gazing at it!

I detected a sly peep in my direction by the teacher, and I was sure I observed the semblance of a smile flicker for an instant upon her comely face. That was all! The strict business of the play was on. Johnny tramped the boards!

From where I sat viewing the performance as critic-audience I caught a glimpse of Clarissa peering at me from behind a fold in the drop. Other young faces stole furtive glances in my direction, evidently noting the effect of Johnny's appearance before the footlights.

The leading lady followed the leading man on to the stage and said her lines with all the finish of the tried actress. The support entered at the proper time from among the hastily constructed wings, told their stories,

and left me still so amazed that I forgot to applaud the extraordinary efforts being made in the cause all of us loved so well to honor.

Only a few minutes were consumed in running off the main feature of Johnny's program, and as it was the last number I hastened back to the stage as soon as the curtain screened those young actors from the view of the house.

Instantly I was warned that secrecy was required for the present, and that I must pay no attention to the surprise; for that was Johnny's own accomplishment, because he knew I would appreciate any effort on his part which meant so much for the advancement of the cause of conservation in their corner of the township.

What a program that was, to be sure!

Songs and tableaux, and one-minute speeches and dialogues, and then the play as a climax. For a moment I wondered if the surprise I had in store for the whole community—but especially for Johnny Wade and Jimmy Watson—would be as great as the one just staged in my presence.

When I learned something of the boy's plans for his Thanksgiving Day entertainment, I made up my mind that there would be one number on the program—impromptu, of course, provided I could arrange the details to my entire satisfaction—that ought to bring down the house. Now I was con-

cerned about the prospective laurels as I contemplated the very great impression the playlet would make on the assemblage of pupils, parents, teachers and friends who might be in attendance upon those Thanksgiving Day exercises.



## CHAPTER XXXIX

O Nature!

Enrich me with the knowledge of thy works;  
Snatch me to heaven.

—Thompson.

I made my way over desert and irrigated fields almost diagonally through the township to "Paradise."

Since my return from my visit to the old red schoolhouse I had not visited the Watsons. Letters had passed between little Lucy and me, as well as her brother and Johnny. They had urged me to tramp around their way before Thanksgiving Day, for the purpose of talking about winter preparations for the birds.

It was the morning before Thanksgiving Day. Jim Watson was at the barn for tools, and as I slipped over the back corral fence he was turning off toward the house, before he went back to the field, where he had been plowing all the morning. I called to him from the top of the fence, and he smilingly walked toward me.

"Hello! Mighty glad ter see yuh! Goin' far?" he questioned as he extended his hand for a hearty shake.

"I am looking for something new for

Thanksgiving Day. Do you know of anything?"

"Nope. Nothin' doin' 'round here what I know of," he replied. "Everybody's well an' happy, gittin' ready fer winter an' makin' over fixin's fer the birds. Mandy's in the house an' the kids are to school. Yuh know there ain't no school tomorrer an' Friday, an' all o' them kids is plannin' fer a great holiday. We all go over ter Tom Wade's fer dinner tomorrer, an'—gee! but I wisht you was goin' too."

"Thank you. I may call around that way before the dinner is eaten and the other festivities are over," I admitted. "Perhaps I'll see your girls and boys then, for Jimmy and Lucy said they wanted to ask me about something pertaining to winter preparations for our feathered friends. I have had many things to do off in another direction recently, and they have kept me from joining you here occasionally. Then, too, I wanted to tell them about my visit of two weeks ago."

I did not give him a chance to quiz me, but led the way into the house that I might greet Mrs. Watson. She asked about the result of my far-away trip, saying, "What about that schoolteacher we've heard so much about over there?" I evaded her question, pleading that I had no time to talk about that subject, for it was a long story, even more wonderful than had been reported, and that soon after Thanksgiving Day, or

perhaps on that day, I would try to tell them more about my visit to her.

I asked them to say "Hello!" to all of the little folks, and passed on through their front gate toward home.

The woman nature teacher, with two of her bird-stewards, had accepted my invitation to be present at the celebration at the Wade schoolhouse on the morrow. According to my plans for their comfort while journeying to that distant countryside, they were to pass "Paradise."

I had suggested to them that they take a certain route, stop a few minutes at the Watson home, and then plan to reach the Wade center of activities about the time for the exercises to begin. I had laid particular stress upon that point, because a holiday dinner was to precede the program, and there might be a little delay at the last moment in getting the audience into the schoolroom.

Promptly at twelve, noon, the next day I strode into the yard at the Wade ranch. The Watson two-cylinder was already parked alongside the granary. I heard a door slam hurriedly somewhere in the rear of the house. Then I saw one or two figures flit past the dining-room windows as I neared the porch entrance.

Dinner was ready to be served, apparently, but there were no guests in sight to sit down to that groaning board. "Every pesky one on 'em's out 'round the place seein' the new

bird fixin's 'cept me an' Mandy," called Mrs. Wade as she gave me a kindly greeting.

At that moment in walked Mrs. Watson, with both arms laden with goodies, and she nearly spilled the contents of one cream pitcher and a big pickle-dish as she noticed me standing in the room.

"For goodness sake!" she exclaimed. "Yuh didn't say nothin' 'bout comin' out here yistidday—an'—an' I near dropped all this here. My, but I was s'prised!"

"That's one o' our s'prises fer the day, Mandy," laughed Sally Wade.

"Any more like 'em, I wonder!" gasped the visitor.

I was quite out of hearing, on my way to the orchard and outbuildings, by that time, so I did not hear the response. I had more urgent business among the youngsters of both families, and I knew where to locate them.

I found Clarissa and Johnny explaining their newest features to the astonished Jimmy and his father, while the remainder of the children formed an intensely interested group around the speakers.

Once again I slipped quietly up to the sensitive little Lucy and made my presence known by touching her gently on the shoulder. As upon the other occasion, she held her pose perfectly, although, as she afterward admitted, she was greatly surprised to learn that I was one of the guests of the day's celebration.

Johnny and his sister had their backs toward me, so they were not upset by my appearance among their friends. I listened to Johnny's story of the inspiration producing his wonderful bird-bath, shelter, feeding station and community birdhouse combined, and heard the exclamations of genuine praise and delight from the lips of Jim Watson and his children.

At that moment a long-drawn dinner call resounded in our ears. For the time being even the birds were forgotten, so great was the rush toward the house for the long-awaited meal. All yelled their delight on seeing me, and started on a sprint for the house.

It resolved itself into a keen race between Clarissa and Jimmy-the-Second. Almost was the girl ahead of him at one time! But the speed was too great for her to maintain for such a distance, and Jimmy "won by a neck!" as Tom Wade declared a minute later.

Only a moment was consumed in seating the fourteen diners comfortably at the big table. Less time was occupied in getting the big and little plates, platters, gravy-bowls and vegetable dishes into circulation, while the air was glitteringly alive with knives, forks, spoons of all sizes, jelly-dishes, pickle-dishes and other impedimenta which were employed to serve a host of hungry children and adults—on Thanksgiving Day at this dinner!

Between bites of delicious, juicy turkey, mashed potatoes, pickled peaches, sweet cucumber pickles, crabapple preserves, raised biscuits with golden-yellow butter spread thickly thereon, richly-creamed dried corn, home-canned string beans, doughnuts, mince pie, and—to cap the sheaf of tasty bounties!—plum pudding, with sparkling apple cider in huge pitcherfuls, to wash down this mass of eatables, I heard some wonderment expressed by the Watsons regarding the early gathering at the banquet.

Johnny was concealed within a perfect mystery barrage. He was quiet—uncommonly so for him, especially with all that food in front of him—yet I thought he did the feast entire justice. Not a word had been said about further plans for the day, and I observed that the Watson family was still mystified.

It appeared to have been prearranged that the host should relieve the strain under which all of us ate our dinner, just about the time when we had satisfied our inner cravings, and before anyone had had a chance to leave that hospitable board, by divulging a portion of the truth concerning the reason for such an early dinner.

“We’re all goin’ over to the schoolhouse,” explained the rancher, most deliberately for him, “ter hev some doin’s got up by the kiddies uv our school—that’s why we’re in a mite uv a hurry.”

A noisy shuffling of chairs and feet fol-



lowed this announcement, and a hasty departure from the house was in preparation. No one made an attempt to remove the dishes from the table; they stood as we left them upon finishing our meal. All made a rush for wraps, robes, teams and "flivver," in order to insure reaching the schoolhouse in good season.

The big room was about half-filled when we entered, and I wish you could have been a quiet observer of the faces of the Watson family as we sat down among the early comers!

## CHAPTER XL

There's a little brown thrush sitting up in a tree;  
He is singing to me! He is singing to me!  
And what does he say, little girl, little boy?  
'Oh, the world's running over with joy!'

Under the leadership of crafty Tom Wade the adult members of our party were piloted to seats far in the front. With them went the Watson children. Clarissa, Johnny and Martha Wade slipped around to the side aisle and disappeared behind the curtain.

I dropped on to a back bench when we first entered the room. From my place nearest the door I observed that these children had been missed by the Watsons. Eager inquiries were made for them, and in response I saw Tom's lips moving, but I was unable to hear what he said. Evidently he was excusing the absence of his children from the party.

I sat where I could get a perfect view of the road leading up to the schoolhouse. The pupils, parents, patrons and friends of the "hull deestrick!" were coming rapidly toward the common rendezvous, some on foot, some in buggies, surries, buckboards, and once in a while a "flivver" load pulled up to the door. All appeared to be in a

hurry. Surely this was an unheard-of thing among them, an attraction never before starred in the community.

From the stage came smothered exclamations of surprise, sudden outbursts of gay laughter, eager questionings and quiet but forceful answers by the little woman-teacher who commanded her forces with extraordinary power for a little body.

By the time every seat in the schoolroom was occupied, the window ledges were packed; men, women and children stood in tiers against three walls of the interior—and still they came crowding in! I had already surrendered my bench to a late-coming parent who was bent upon hearing all that was going on, as well as seeing everyone in the audience.

“Wal, I swan!” soliloquized the man. “Ef there hain’t Tom Wade a-settin’ up there as big as Cuffy!” No one paid the least attention to him.

“I won’er what ’tis all ’bout, ennyhow!” again he ruminated. Apparently the woman sitting next to him thought he was addressing her.

“Dunno! There’s Jim Watson’s fambly f’om ‘Par’dise’ over there with the Wades, an’ I guess suthin’s goin’ ter happen, with them all here,” she replied. “An’ there goes Tom Wade up front, too. I do b’lieve he’s goin’ter make a speech!” she added, as Wade walked deliberately toward the stage.

Tom was chairman of the school board in

his district. He had promised the "little schoolma'am" that he would tell his fellow-ranchers and their families and friends why they had been asked to come together for "this exteroernery occasion!" He said he welcomed them in behalf of "the hull deestrick an' its teacher an' its children ter see the program they was jist goin' ter enjoy. His school thought it would be a mighty good thing ter celebrate Thanksgiving Day in a new way, an' now they was all a-goin' ter see what the little fellers an' their teacher could do." Then he sat down beside Jim Watson, who whispered something to him which appeared to please the chairman very much.

A tiny call bell sounded clearly, hidden somewhere among the mysteries out of sight. The teacher stepped quickly from one of the side entrances to the stage and told us modestly that her girls and boys were going to render a program of real thanksgiving in honor of the wild birds of their community, for their strenuous efforts to save the crops of the valley from insect and rodent pests. She said the idea was original with Johnny Wade. It was he who urged her and his schoolmates to enter into such an undertaking, and he thought it would be just the right thing to invite the entire countryside to witness the performance.

She closed her remarks by making the announcement that the first number would be a song in which the entire school membership would take part.

“Tinkle, tinkle!” rang the bell, and the curtain was slowly drawn to one side.

Before anyone could make out the stage setting or tell how anything looked behind the scenes, round after round of applause greeted the little performers. They were all in bird costume, in imitation of a few of the species found in that region, and now they shuffled into place in a small, compact semi-circle close to the edge of the stage.

A wild field and woodland scene was their background. Along one side and in one corner was a wire fence surmounted by tall trees of several species, while one border of the stage at the back was made to represent a field of grain which had been cut and shocked. Birds' nests were plentiful in the branches of these trees, and from a hidden nook sang a caged canary as though his heart were bursting with joy!

As I studied the setting I thought I recognized a familiar scene not far distant. The closer I inspected the different points, the more inclined I was to the belief that I was looking at the far fence line on the farm at “Paradise.”

I glanced in the direction of the Watson family to see if they had observed any similarity to their row of trees. Sure enough! Jimmy was talking in hurried whispers to his mother, and she in turn nudged her husband, evidently calling his attention to the staging of what appeared to be a copy of their own tree-plantings and architecture.

All such critical inspections were being made while the teacher rapped her baton smartly on the book she held in her hand. She blew gently on a pitch-pipe; the note was taken and softly hummed — when all voices broke into a rollicking bird-song!

She led them with a master hand as each childish voice poured forth his soul in the strain of that old, old song, beginning with these words:

There's a little brown thrush sitting up in a tree;  
He is singing to me! He is singing to me!  
And what does he say, little girl, little boy?  
"Oh, the world's running over with joy!"

While the closing simple chord mingled its vibrations with the echoes of the thunders of applause which greeted the finish of the song, a big touring car rolled up to the schoolhouse door.

Behold! It was my nature teacher friend and her two bird-stewards from the far-away country. The car made some noise coming to a stop, and this attracted the attention of the audience as well as of the performers just finishing their number.

I stepped out to greet my surprise party, extending them a hearty welcome, and asked after their comfort. They alighted, and together we walked into the schoolhouse. I caught the eye of Tom Wade and beckoned to him, urging that he join us. He crowded back to where we stood waiting, was introduced to the visitors, whom he led forward



that he might find them a place from which they could enjoy the day's program.

The entrance of the visiting party created a small-sized panic!

Room was made for them—how, I cannot say!—and finally they were settled in their places, ready to witness the performance.

I watched Jim and Mandy Watson as the newcomers sat down in front of them. Almost instantly they turned toward each other and began to consult in low whispers. They nodded together for a moment, and then the mother turned and whispered something to their eldest son. I could see him stretch his little neck far forward that he might get a better view of the travelers. I was sure he asked his mother a question, for I saw her bow her head in acquiescence.

I observed Jim Watson turn slowly and look carefully from one part of the crowded room to another. I thought he might be hunting me, so I flattened myself against the wall in a corner, where I stood and kept out of sight.

I was certain of his recognition of my friend, and that he was trying to get a look at me that he might tell me so, as well as to send me a scowling message for not letting his family into my secret.

## CHAPTER XLI

We all need to go to school to the children.

—Liberty Hyde Bailey.

The little bell, seemingly impatient because of the delay in starting the next number, called a bit sharply on the players to be ready.

All eyes turned toward the stage in time to witness the entrance of tiny Martha Wade accompanied by two neighbor boys, George Hanson and Henry Williams, both about her own age. Henry was smaller than his companions, and his teacher chose him purposely that he might play this baby part. We were informed the trio was to represent "A Hard-Working Family."

Martha was clad as a little hen sparrow. George Hanson represented a wrangling, strutting cock sparrow. His fussy activities so closely simulated those of the little English cousin that nearly everyone in the audience laughed until the tears rolled down his cheeks. The boy Henry was a scantily-fledged baby sparrow, evidently upon his first outing with his parents.

The birdling cheeped and cheeped for food and parental attention, as all baby English

sparrows do, while he stumbled along behind his parents with his awkward baby hop. The mother and father birds hunted for weed-seeds, insects and worms, paying little attention to his outcries. Occasionally one or the other old birds fed him a fuzzy caterpillar or a soft worm, so true to life that they were applauded to the echo.

Just as the baby sparrow squatted in apparent exhaustion from having followed his parents for such a long time around the stage, and about the time for the dialogue to begin, a huge spotted cat bolted ferociously toward them, tore across to the place at which the birds were feeding, and made such a terrifying attack upon them that the sparrows forgot to say their lines and ran pell-mell into the wings!

What roars of laughter followed the onslaught of that bloodthirsty feline!

The cat disappeared after a moment of exaggerated nimbleness, and lay in wait in the wings for his feathered prey when they should return to the stage to tell us their story.

I suspected that this bird-killing cat was none other than Johnny Wade. He was the sort of a youngster which one would select for this part, for he would enter into the spirit of his role with great enthusiasm and with unbounded confidence in his ability to carry off the acting in such a manner as to satisfy the most exacting critic—at least, he would have done so earlier in the season.

The heavily worked teacher experienced some difficulty in getting her sparrow family before the footlights again to go on with their number. Not until a hoarse whisper from the "cat" hiding in the wings announced, "Aw, g'wan out; I ain't goin' ter hurt yuh!" would they attempt the second entrance.

Once more the audience howled with delight!—and I knew it was Johnny!

At this entrance Mr. Cock Sparrow came out first, just as though he wanted to show his little brown spouse what a brave fellow he was, and said for his opening lines: "I'm Misser Cock Sparrow, I am, an' I eat——" and when he was about to enumerate the many things he ate, again that spotted cat crawled menacingly from his hiding place on to the stage.

With a heart-bursting squeak that cock sparrow tumbled into the wings, fell over his family in his hurried flight, and disarranged his feathers so disastrously that even his quiet-mannered teacher, who was pinning her faith on this youngster's histrionic ability, broke into a bubbling laugh.

For the third time the walls of that old schoolhouse were cracked by booming, bursting bombs of hilarity!

I glanced toward the honor guests of the day, and even they were doubled up in paroxysms of laughter which lasted until the teacher took the cat to one side to quiet him.

Finally order was restored and the entertainment went on. From where I stood I could see that the teacher had her arms around the cat, still soothing him.

Then the baby sparrow hopped timidly on to the stage, thinking, no doubt, that he would be as brave as his father had been a moment before. The spotted cat gave a hair-raising yowl, spit threateningly once or twice toward the mussed-up bunch of feathers—and the faint-hearted birdling fled precipitately into the arms of his parents in the wings. Another awful yell went up from that audience!

A half-grown boy, sitting well back, stood up and called out desperately, "Hey, there, some o' you folks up front kick that air cat outen the house an' let ther show go on!"

That heartfelt appeal brought down the house!

Rousing cannonades of handclapping answered that realistic demand for protection of the little sparrow family.

As the boy settled back upon his bench his face became crimson. I believe if there had been any way by which he could have reached the little stage quickly and easily he would have bounded upon it, without saying a word to anyone, and there would he have fought the fight of his life for those defenseless feathered things.

His face wore a tense, urgent expression which showed determination enough to walk over the heads of the audience if that spotted

cat did anything more to disturb the harmony of the day's events.

A glance at the faces staring up into his, as he declared himself so vigorously, assured me that the great majority of the assemblage was with him. A few laughed a sickly sort of a chuckle, but the tragedy of a wild bird in the clutches of a marauding cat was brought home to them so realistically that they were up in arms in its defense, ready to banish the cat forever when its daily proclivities came home to them with such startling truthfulness.

This was a children's entertainment. Girls and boys dwell ever in the realm of the imagination, and carry on their daily activities under its powerful sway, until the day arrives when commercialism robs them of their birthright and other man-made distractions cause them to lose forever their individual points of view.

The wise little woman-teacher's end had been gained before she knew it, and in a manner on which she had not counted. Gun-Grabbing Johnny made a great hit as a stage cat—but it was the villain's triumph!

The little sparrow trio came out together this time, no longer obsessed by the thought of that wicked animal, although I was sure I saw an occasional furtive glance wingward by each one of them. They hopped about the stage quite happily, and told the audience of the immense quantities of insects they ate annually, as well as related how



they saved the farmers' lands from becoming overgrown with weed pests.

Mr. Cock Sparrow said he and his mate had participated in many campaigns against insect hordes in days gone by, and always, he declared, they had come out victorious, no matter what the odds were against them. Then he expressed the wish that the people of that valley would give his family and their descendants a fair chance to demonstrate their usefulness under all conditions. He closed with the remark: "For we are God's creatures just as much as is the robin, the bluebird or the dove!"

As soon as the sparrow family reached the wings, the bell called Gardner Adamson, who represented Mr. Robin Redbreast, to relate a bit of his history. Robin hopped and he ran, telling between breaths the story of how his breast became red in the ancient days when he had saved the fire on earth in the snowy north regions against the attack of the polar bear.

He told of the immense numbers of bugs and worms of various kinds with which he fed himself and his fledglings in the spring and summer, and that his life was one long round of song and work in the cause of mankind. He admitted that he frequently took a few cherries from the farmers' trees, but he believed he was entitled to rightful toll of such fruit when he labored so unremittingly his whole life to save it from insect ravages.

“And listen to my beautiful song during the spring and summer! No other bird awakens man with ‘Cheerily, cheer up! Cheerily, cheer up!’ at so early an hour in the morning. I am the first bird awake and the last one to bed at night, and I am a light sleeper—always ready to scour lawn, field or forest in man’s behalf!” he declared seriously.

## CHAPTER XLII

We need to emphasize the youthful life.  
—Liberty Hyde Bailey.

From behind a tree standing in the far corner of the stage hopped big Jack Armstrong, garbed as a flicker. He stabbed at ants with his dagger-tipped beak, while his long, spear-headed tongue was thrust rapidly forward and back to facilitate the swallowing of the stiff, scratchy insects he was devouring. He “wick—wick—wicked!” as he hastened over the ground and out into the field away from the trees.

A meadowlark, Gertrude Robinson, who heard him giving vent to his strange call, walked daintily toward him from a nearby shock of grain beside which he had been hunting grasshoppers, crickets and beetles, and said in a sweetly modulated tone, “What a strange voice you have, Mr. Flicker.”

“Huh! You don’t like my voice; do you, eh?” ejaculated Mr. Flicker. “Well, maybe I can’t sing as well as you can, but I’ll bet I can beat you hunting ants and bugs of all kinds. These fine singers don’t amount to much, I’m thinking!”

“I’d like to know!” exclaimed Mrs. Mead-

owlark. "Why, I eat more crickets and grasshoppers in one summer than you eat in all your life, I do believe. Huh! I save the farmer's grass crops for his herds, and I keep the grasshoppers from eating up the young wheat and other grains just as they are coming up. Then just hear the many exquisite melodies I sing for man from one end of the season to the other."

"Ah, but you can't bore into a thick-barked tree like I do, Mrs. Meadowlark, and get out the big fat grubs I find hidden away in there, so you can't," defended Mr. Flicker. "No birds save as many trees as my relatives and I do every year. All winter long we search the trees for eggs and worms, digging into all sorts of holes and crevices, house-cleaning for the trees, so to speak, so that they may put on their new spring dresses when the weather gets warm and the sap begins to run. Trees couldn't get along without woodpeckers, I tell you!"

Mr. Flicker hopped as he bragged, and Mrs. Meadowlark strutted about like a man, as important as any individual in creation, while they told us how valuable they were to the earth at all seasons.

Again the bell sounded and the curtain moved aside. We heard subdued noises behind the drop, an occasional giggle from some child, quiet orders to one or another player to hurry, and the bell announced that all was ready.

A beautiful picture greeted our eyes. A

very harmonious grouping of all the school children, as they took their pitch to sing another chorus, occupied the center of the stage. A simple song of childhood and youth, one sung at the knees of all mothers, was wafted to us:

There came to my window one morning in spring  
A sweet little robin; she came there to sing,  
And the tune that she sang, it was lovelier far  
Than ever I heard on the flute or guitar:

Ri tooral li looral li li lay,  
Ri tooral li looral li li lay,  
Why don't you sing tooral li looral li lay,  
Ri tooral li looral li li lay?

But just as she finished her beautiful song  
A thoughtless young man with his gun came along.  
He killed and he carried my robin away—  
She'll never sing more at the close of the day:

Chorus—

The sentiment of this song was well received, for the girls and boys put their whole souls into its rendition. The teacher then announced that the next number would be a song and recitation by Clara Elliott.

A tiny golden-haired tot of about seven years stepped daintily before the footlights robed as a bluebird. She sang and recited in a very pleasing manner, pleading seriously for this annual visitant to our home surroundings. I had never before seen such a harmony of coloration as her makeup ex-

hibited. Her appeal was exquisitely and cheerfully voiced and completed without promptings. When she attempted the song of the bluebird, "Purity, purity, pure, pure!" I saw a number of heads in the audience nodding in unison with her tempo.

Once more the call bell demanded the closing of the curtain. Again the teacher stepped to the front of the stage and, waiting a moment for the applause to cease, she said: "We have noticed from the stage a particular friend of the birds who is one of our visitors today. My girls and boys have heard so much about his defense of the wild-life in his community and in other places, and that he has erected so many fixtures on his father's farm for the benefit of the wild birds at all seasons, all of us would like to hear from him at this time. I refer to Jimmy Watson of 'Paradise,' who sits over there with his parents. Jimmy does not believe in saving certain types of wild-life just because he likes them better than others. He is sure that everything in creation has its use, and that it must be allowed to live and labor on earth in order to carry out God's laws. He is a wise young conserver, and so early in life has learned the immense value of wild-life to mankind. Will you come up here, Jimmy, and tell us something of the labor of love in which you are engaged? My pupils would like a real message from 'Paradise'!"

Wholly unaware that such a call might be



made upon him, Jimmy sat enraptured by every number on the program. He did not realize that he was being addressed, until his name was spoken, at which time his father nudged him vigorously in order to bring him to himself.

The audience manifested unstinted approval of this suggestion. They accorded the boy a real ovation. Every farmer in touch with that valley in several townships knew something about the activities that were being carried forward at "Paradise" by the Watson family. A few were aware of the fact that the Watson line fences housed in the birds and courted the favor of other wild creatures because they had faith in their value to the family.

When Jimmy's name was pronounced I looked quickly in the direction of the woman-teacher from the other county. I wished to note carefully the impression the name of Watson would make upon her. I was sure I saw her move impulsively; then she glanced quickly behind her. As Jimmy made his way toward the front, I saw her eye him closely.

When he faced his audience he appeared to be paler than usual, yet no one would have known by his actions that his number was not a regular feature of the day's celebration. He was quite at home before these people, experienced no appreciable diffidence, and expressed himself with much force. He knew

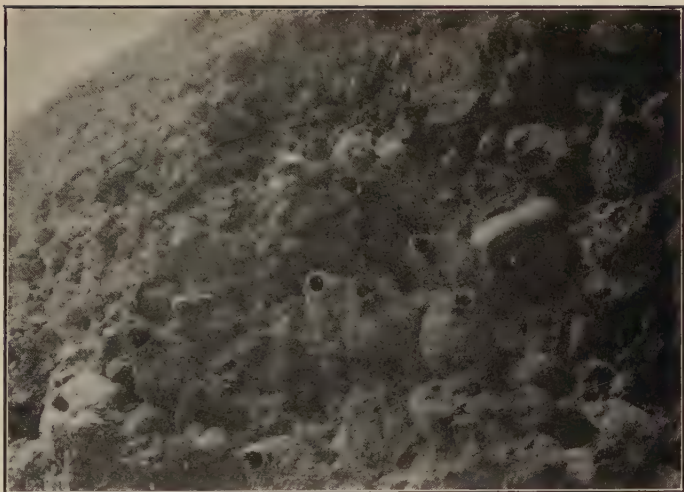


FIG. 30. Nests of Cliff Swallows on Roof of Rock Cave.



FIG. 31. Female Bluebird and Bird House.



FIG. 32. Nearly Grown White-faced Glossy Ibis, Bred in the Alkali Swamps of Utah.

the subject dearest to his heart from its every angle.

He spoke about three minutes, quietly, eagerly telling us the story of conservation as practiced at "Paradise." He gave general instructions for the making and setting up of the various devices for use by the birds around their farm and home. He emphasized particularly the importance of quiet, unstinted devotion to all forms of created things—trees, flowers, reptiles, birds and animals of all kinds that were to be found among the mountains and out upon the desert.

Jimmy reminded us that there were no guns or cats at "Paradise," for they had no need for them. He convinced us that the birds caught more rodents than cats could catch annually. Then, too, there was no disturbance of their friends by such animals—and the birds learned quickly of the standing invitation for them to come and to stay!

The boy finished his speech with the following words: "Ever sence I was a little feller I have bin a playmate o' the birds an' the flowers an' trees, an' all other wild things what grows outdoors. I learned from a teacher we oncet had in our school that everything what lives has a right to its life, an' will help us all the time 'f we'll give 'em a chancet. An' she said everything in the hull creation was alive, too! She learned us that the birds done more fer man than anything else could do; that they saved his crops

fer him an' his trees, too. Then we set up  
baths an' feeding shelters and houses out  
among the trees fer the little fellers. We all  
think now that these wild things are the very  
best fr'en's we hev in the world!"

## CHAPTER XLIII

We shall yet come back to the masters, and  
there will be teachings in the market-places.

—Liberty Hyde Bailey.

Jimmy returned to his place between his parents during the profound silence which followed his little talk. He had made a great impression on the ranchers in the audience, and many turned eager faces toward him as though they would second his appeal. His impromptu speech was a feature of the day. When the people realized that he had finished speaking, they began a round of handclapping and cries for "More! more!" in their effort to show appreciation for what he had said.

Mother and father Watson beamed happily upon their son. The stranger with us turned squarely around on her bench and nodded to him. That capped the climax. Another burst of approbation brought the boy once more to his feet, and with a dignified bow toward his audience he gravely thanked them.

The next presentation was announced while the roomful talked animatedly about the boy's address in behalf of the birds in their midst.



A tall, slender boy by the name of Walter Evans, dressed in deepest black, with red epaulettes on his shoulders, represented the red-wing blackbird. He entered gracefully from one side, giving the beautiful, reed-like call of this bird, and was enthusiastically received. He sang "O-ka-lee-uh!" as he walked in a stately manner across the front of the stage. He said he and his mate liked best to build their home in the rushes of the swamps and sloughs, or along the streams where the cattails and sedges grew on the farms, just to be closely in touch with the insect life with which such places abounded. "And we get more cutworms around the corn and in the gardens and fields than any other bird living. No, we don't pull up the corn; we are just after the worms. O-ka-lee-uh!" As he left the stage he said: "I'm the natural-born enemy of the grasshoppers. O-ka-lee-uh!"

Well-meant outbursts of applause rewarded this effort. The boy was a recent convert of Johnny Wade's conservation, and being such a newcomer in the field, his friends were only too glad to encourage his enlistment to the echo.

There seemed to be no one in that school who was slighted on this day of all days in the history of the district. Small and large, young and old alike, had their opportunities to raise their voices for the birds.

The smallest girl in school had had her chance to sing the praises of the bluebird.

Now the smallest boy, Edgar Thompson, hopped nimbly into view. He was arrayed in yellow, had a black cap on his head, and spread a pair of wings marked in black and white. Edging well toward the front of the stage, he bravely began the following lines:

Per-chic-o-ree! Per-chic-o-ree! Sweet! See?  
I'm called "wild canary," but I'm not, not me!  
I'm just a gay goldfinch from the south, far away,  
And I eat and I sing the long summer day.  
I come when the big yellow dandelion flies  
His fairy balloons in the far-away skies.

When the thistle's in bloom—ah, then I am ready!  
Both furnish me food to make my wings steady.  
I can't make my nest like a soft, downy cradle  
'Till I get the right stuff—and then I am able  
To feed happy birdlings the tiniest weedseeds,  
And I do for the farmer all kinds of good deeds.

The prompter, hidden in the wings, worked overtime in aiding this brave little fellow to deliver his lines intelligibly. But it was a happy, well-disposed company that listened to his offering, and accepted it with the best possible spirit and gave him the closest attention.

Long before this number was announced I thought the supply of approbation had been exhausted. Yet somehow, known only to girls and boys, a fresh reserve was brought into requisition and this youngster was given the initial outpourings.

"I didn't know them air little yaller birds was enny good," I heard a rancher who was sitting near me say to his wife. "An' they eats thistle seeds an' dandelions seeds, huh?" he queried.

A little girl sitting next to him and over-hearing him address his wife said: "An' they eats lots an' lots o' other weed-seeds, too!"

"Yuh don't say!" he stammered.

The tinkling bell sounded for the withdrawal of the curtain once more. The little teacher again stood smilingly before her audience. She reminded us that there was still one number on the program before they came to the playlet, and she hoped the audience would be considerate of the age of the child who would attempt it, and try to overlook any errors which might be committed by him, because this was the first time he had ever appeared before an audience of any kind.

She went on to say that the number was original with Johnny Wade, and that he thought it would be of greater value to have a boy who had never before done such a thing, in public or elsewhere, to do it for them, than to have some child attempt the feature who had been greatly interested in the work.

She did not tell us what it was to be, but as she turned to signal for the drawing of the curtain she said: "I think I'll let the boy, Charles Anderson, tell you all about it when he appears."

Charles was standing in the center of the stage when the scene was exposed to view. "Johnny Wade said 'at not many pepul knowed anyfin' 'bout how er robin makes his nest—I means how the mother robin makes it," he related. "'Coz she's the one what makes all the nests. The father is kind of a lazy ole feller, I guess, 'coz he don't work none er help 'er enny when she's workin' hard—so Johnny says. He jist flies 'long wiv her when she's carryin' fin's to make their home, jist ter see 'f no other birds fights 'er."

The boy turned and took some dry grass from a box standing beside him. Then he grabbed a dab of wet mud and began to mould a robin's nest into form. "Yuh see," he continued, by way of explanation of the construction of the nest, "the ole bird, the mother bird, of course, takes some straw er grass an' little twigs, an' lays 'em in the crotch uv a tree—jist 'bout so; an' 'en she plasters some mud this way an' that, an' lays more dried grass an' fin's on the wet mud, an' goes after more stuff. An' 'en she brings some ole cotton er feathers er ole paper er string, jist 's though she was goin' ter tie the nest to the tree—but she hain't. Then she pokes more mud all over the stuff with her bill, an' jist sets right in the hole an' pushes an' squats like er settin' hen—she does!"

He worked and chattered until he became so absorbed in the making of that little bird

nest that he forgot all about his audience or where he was. I was sure he took the group of upturned children's faces, watching his every movement so closely, as his inspiration. All seemed to be interested in seeing how good a counterfeit he could construct. He worked away for some minutes, scarcely saying a word. Then he finished what he had been told to do with the comment: "Huh! Tain't a good job nohow! Gee! I thought 'twas easier 'n that to make a bird's nest. I never tried the thin' afore. I bet no ole mother robin 'ud live in a thin' like that! She'd git lost sure! I sure will watch the nex' robin closer'n that when I see her makin' her nest, an' now I know how hard 'tis, I bet I won't never knock another nest down—I betcha I won't!"

How they cheered that promise to the echo. Girls and boys stood in their seats and shouted, "We won't nuther!"

## CHAPTER XLIV

All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women are merely players.  
—Shakespeare.

The spirit of something-going-to-happen stalked noiselessly through that audience, whispered a suggestion of expectancy into the ears of each listener, and left him with face turned stageward and neck craned to fullest elongation—waiting!

The mere announcement that a playlet would be given for their entertainment ordinarily would have set the girls and boys to buzzing with exaggerated interest, but when it had been made public that one of their own mates was the author of the forthcoming production, their eagerness was unparalleled.

It required several minutes for the final preparations to be made, so when the bell called in a subdued manner for everyone to be ready, the audience was motionless, tense, scarcely breathing.

Suddenly every noise on the stage ceased. That seemed to be the first sign that the curtain was to be drawn. Youngsters in arms were hoisted high above fathers' heads in answer to clamors to see.

A sharp tinkle of the bell sent the teacher



before the footlights. She smiled indulgently at the impatient listeners, and said: "I shall read the list of players to you before the curtain is drawn, because we did not indulge ourselves in the luxury of printed programs for general distribution. I hope all of you will remember that the playlet is not an attempt at theatricals; rather shall my girls and boys try to tell you something about the species of birds each one represents, in a simple, unaffected manner which shall enable you to bear in mind the object lesson we are trying to teach. Each bird will exhibit itself in costume and as true to life as the capacity of the performer will permit. The following is a description of the sketch as it will be given, with a complete list of the players taking part in this production:

A One-Act Playlet, Entitled,  
"BUGS OR BIRDS?"

Author—JOHN WADE

Under the Management and Direction of His  
Teacher  
Miss White

The Players

Mr. Great Horned Owl.....	George Wilkins
Mr. Magpie.....	Margaret Wilson
Mr. California Quail.....	Henry Atherton
Mrs. California Quail.....	Grace Hardy
Mrs. Barn Swallow.....	Mary Carpenter
Mrs. Everyday Hen.....	Jennie Hunter

The Brood of Quails..Fifteen School Children  
with  
Miss Mourning Dove.....Clarissa Wade  
and

Mr. Western Red-Tail Hawk....John Wade

Scene: Walnut Row and Covert at "Paradise."

Then she slipped out of sight almost before anyone knew she had ceased speaking. With triumphant tone the bell commanded the curtain—and we were looking upon the stage setting of Johnny Wade's playlet!

I stole a glance in the direction of Sallie and Tom Wade. I observed a furtive movement of the mother as she brushed a tear off her cheek. Her face, flushed with happiness, was turned toward her husband. He smiled a make-believe smile which denied its honest birth.

The stage illumination had been dimmed to represent early morning on a cloudy day. It required a moment to accustom one's eyes to the prevailing light at such an hour, one when the birds were hastening abroad for food and drink for themselves and for their fledglings.

The scene opened with Mr. Hawk sitting near the top of what would have been a tall tree out of doors, firmly clutching the strongest branch. In a well-screened spot, two or three trees distant, sat Mr. Owl, all hunched up, taking a nap.

"Psseu! psseu! psseu! Good morning, Mr.

Owl! Watcher goin' ter sleep now fer? Come, it's daylight! Wake up, yuh ole sleepy head, yuh!" snapped Mr. Hawk.

"Too-whit—too-who!" rasped Mr. Owl. "'Tis, too, time ter sleep after you've had yer breakfast. An' I had mine long 'fore you was 'wake, so I did!"

"Whad yuh hev this mornin', huh? Some poor little bird, I betch-yuh!" chortled Mr. Hawk.

"I had a big fat rat I ketched over to Bill Jones', an' some mice from his back field, an' a plump gopher outen his pastur'," growled Mr. Owl.

"Psseu! psseu! psseu!" whistled Mr. Hawk and flopped lumberingly to a limb near Mr. Owl, who spun his swiveled head and glared menacingly at the intruder.

"Didn't yuh git none o' Billy Brown's chickens las' night, yuh ole chicken thief, yuh!" Mr. Hawk fired at him.

"Yer a chicken thief yerself, yuh know yuh be, an' yuh do it in broad daylight, too—that's what yuh do!" hoo-hooed Mr. Owl. "An' what's more, yuh grab every little bird yuh kin outen the nest; yuh know yuh do!"

"But I don't go 'round stickin' my head into holes in the trees an' snatchin' eggs an' helpless baby birds outen their nests, like you do in the night, when they hain't got no chancet to git 'way!" scornfully screamed Mr. Hawk. "I sails 'round an' 'round over 'em in the daytime, an' I gives 'em a chancet ter git hid—I do!"

"I saw yuh sailin' 'round over that air mournin' dove's nest jist yistidday ter see 'f the babies were ready ter eat!" parried Mr. Owl.

"Yuh was watchin' it, too, was yuh?" demanded Mr. Hawk. "Well, I don't rob mournin' dove's nests no more, sence my wife said so much 'bout the mournful call o' that little bird. I jist can't stand the sound no more, so I've quit!"

At that instant Miss Mourning Dove fluttered lightly to the ground, viewed her surroundings with the wild bird's care, and at a safe distance called out cheerfully, "Coo-oo-oooh, gentlemen! Yuh didn't know I was a-listenin', did yuh? Well, I was, from jist behind the stack over there."

"Did yuh hear what that ole thief uv a Mr. Hawk said jist now, Miss Mournin' Dove?" wailed Mr. Owl.

"Yes, sir, I heerd him," she sighed. "An' I'm jist won'erin' if he meant it. Did yuh, Mr. Hawk?"

"Psseu! psseu! psseu!" whistled Mr. Hawk warningly.

Miss Mourning Dove crouched close to the ground as she listened to the war cry of her old enemy, holding herself in readiness for rapid flight if it became necessary. For an instant she held this pose; then she made her way rapidly under cover of nearby shrubbery. From her hiding place she could shield herself and listen to the conversation of these wily old birds.

"Yes, I meant it, Miss Mourning Dove," answered Mr. Hawk in his sweetest tones. "I hain't goin' ter eat no more mourning doves, nohow—see 'f I do! Sence we all heerd that 'Gun-Grabbin' Johnny' Wade ain't goin' ter kill no more o' my fambly, I jist said ter myself that I hain't goin' ter kill no more mournin' doves er little birds uv no kind—so there now!"

"Won't that be jist lovely, Mr. Owl?" cooed Miss Mourning Dove. "I jist wish yuh'd promise that, too. Please do! An' then I won't hev ter watch out fer yuh at night an' tell my babies ter look out fer yuh, too."

The stillness of the thicket was disturbed by the raucous cry of "Maa-ag! maa-ag!" and that old black-and-white bird dropped on the ground beside Miss Mourning Dove. "I heerd yuh, too, Mr. Hawk, an' if I could b'lieve yuh I'd be the happiest father in the woods. Mr. Owl steals my birdies when he kin fin' 'em at night, when they set an' chatter to me an' their mother to hum—that's what he does! An' Mr. Hawk watches the thickets where my little fellers go, jist ter flop down on 'em every chancet he gits—yuh betcha he does!"

"An' you steal all the eggs uv all the little birds yuh kin all day long, an' they do say that yuh eat up all the babies yuh kin fin'—but I hain't never heerd uv yer eatin' any o' mine!" hooted Mr. Owl.

"Tell yuh what I'll do," interrupted Mr.

Hawk. "Yuh all know 'bout 'Gun-Grabbin' Johnny'—how he killed every bird in sight o' his place all the time, as I said afore. Wal, I heerd he don't hev no gun no more at his house, 'cross the sand ridge from here, an' he an' his folks has sot up bird houses an' feedin' shelters an' baths fer the birds what stay 'round here all winter. If he's done that, I'm willin' ter quit ever disturbin' the chickens an' other birds 's long 's I live—air yuh with me, ole Mr. Owl an' Mr. Magpie?"

Before either of the birds addressed could reply to Mr. Hawk, a tiny, squeaking voice whispered to them out of the air: "Tweet! tweet! tweet! I heerd what yuh-all said, too, an' I'm so glad my fambly won't be disturbed no more by them owls in our barn!" It was Mrs. Barn Swallow, out on an early-morning hunt for aerial insects. "Tweet! tweet! tweet!" she twittered from her place quite near them.

"God-be-praised! God-be-praised! God-be-praised!" called Mr. and Mrs. California Quail from the thickest underbrush. And then all of the little quails sallied forth harm-free, for they too had heard the protection vouchsafed all wild bird-life by Mr. Hawk. "'Gun-Grabbin' Johnny' Wade an' his father has killed lots o' my ancestors," whistled Mr. Quail, "an' if they've quit shooting everything what flies 'round here, we sure kin git a chancet ter save lots o' grain from bein' et up by insecks here an' everywhere else."

"Kut-kut-kah-dah-kut!" cackled Mrs. Ev-



eryday Hen as she wandered slowly toward the thicket that concealed this conclave of wild birds. Mrs. Hen had stolen her nest away from the barn, and now she was returning after having had a bountiful breakfast with the others of her kind.

“Psseu! psseu! psseu!” shrieked Mr. Hawk as she came close to the thicket. At once she squatted on the ground and looked skyward. Seeing no signs of her once dreaded enemy, she skulked hurriedly under convenient cover. As she made her way out of sight Mr. Owl wailed mournfully, “Too-whit!—too-whoo!” and she scudded faster than ever. From her place of concealment she heard a chorus of rough but pleasing laughs, seemingly at her expense, and she wondered what it could mean.

Finally Mr. Hawk called to her: “Psseu! psseu! we hain’t goin’ ter git yuh!” And he added: “We’re jist goin’ ter sign a peace compack not ter hurt no more chickens er no more birds, me an’ Mr. Owl an’ Mr. Magpie is—ain’t yuh glad, ole biddy?”

“Mercy me!” she cackled. “Yuh near scared the life outen me! Glad! I sh’u’d say I be! Now I won’t hev ter keep on callin’ ‘Ptrrrr! ptrrrr!’ ter my chicks no more when I see a big bird ’way up in the air.”

“I think we’d all better git down on the groun’, them’s kin, an’ I’ll take hole uv han’s on one side, with Mr. Owl an’ Mrs. Magpie on t’other, while Mr. an’ Mrs. Quail an’



FIG. 33. Young Marsh Hawks Showing Fight as They Were Photographed.



FIG. 34. Nest of the Western Grebe—Afloat on Alkali Water.

their babies, an' Miss Mournin' Dove—an' Mrs. Barn Swallow, yuh'd better set right on that little weed there," commanded the gruff leader. "An' we kin all set in a semer-circle whilst we three big uns stand up. Mrs. Everyday Hen, yuh'd better set right in the middle uv us—there now! Ain't that fine?"

They formed as their leader directed, and made a very pretty picture. Mr. Hawk led the council in their declaration. "We three kin's uv birds 'gree not ter ketch no more o' the farmer's chickens an' no more wild birds an' eggs, 'coz 'Gun-Grabbin' Johnny' Wade an' Jimmy Watson at 'Par'dise,' an' a lot uv other frien's uv us kind uv birds says they hain't goin' ter kill us no more. We'll jist eat the insecks an' reptiles an' rodents what eats the farmer's crops an' destroys ther trees, an' 'en we all kin live in peace together!"

The curtain shut out the scene as the pledge ended. The playlet was finished in the wildest enthusiasm, with everybody calling and calling for the players.

## CHAPTER XLV

One does not act rightly toward one's fellows  
if one does not know how to act rightly toward  
the earth.—Liberty Hyde Bailey.

There was a babel of tongues out in front for some minutes after the curtain dropped upon the finale of the playlet. It seemed as though everyone in that audience wanted to talk and he wanted everyone to hear him first.

On the stage there was hurry and bustle in preparation for the final tableau, upon which much time and thought had been spent.

We heard a softly whispered "Shhh-shh! Everybody ready?" come from some place behind the scenes. Each impatient listener waited with bated breath for the order to draw the curtain to one side for the last time. Just about the time it was to be accomplished I saw Tom Wade making his way laboriously toward the front of the house. He stood before the stage, smiling as he said: "Fr'en's, we've got one man in this town-ship what has done more fer the birds than ennyone else has, an' he lives in a place what we call 'Par'dise'—an' I don't feel like goin'."



hum after this splendid entertainment 'thout hearin' from Jim Watson."

The calls for the owner of "Paradise" were loud and urgent. After a moment's hesitation he arose and slowly went forward. He stopped within a few feet of the strangers, looked at the woman-teacher for an instant, and then gravely shook hands with her.

Then he faced the audience and, pointing to the stranger he had just greeted, said: "It's mor'n ten year sence this woman-teacher fust cum into our lives—a few years after me an' Mandy was married. She took charge uv our school an' was our teacher fer a hull year. Mandy thought then, an' I'm thinkin' she'd say so yit, that no one else in all her life, 'cept one person, ever give her sich a inspiration fer right livin' an' fer right thinkin'. Mandy has spoke many times uv the big infloocene she had on her life. An' my boy Jimmy, a-settin' over there by his ma, wa'n't much above three year old, an' went to her school every day whilst she was our teacher. She boarded 'roun', and every few weeks cum to our house fer a week er two. We jist c'u'dn't keep the little feller to hum! Then's when he got his fust lessons in lovin' the birds an' the flowers an' all the things what live on earth. All what we know 'bout sich life's what she tole us an' ast us ter remember.

"All what we hev over to our house we owe to her an' the birds an' other wild things she loves so well an' learned us ter love so



much. I wouldn't feel satisfied to break up this 'ere show 'thout hearing a few words from our ole teacher, an' lettin' yuh all learn from her lips what it means to be fr'en's with God's creatures. I fer one would like to hev her step right up on the stage so's we kin all hev a good look at her afore we go hum."

It was so still in that old schoolroom when Jim Watson finished speaking that one could hear one's neighbor's heart beating!

The visiting teacher arose, grasped a hand of each one of her bird-stewards in hers, and started for the stage. They stood before the curtain for an instant, quietly looking over that intensely interested audience. Then she nodded her head toward Jimmy Watson, calling him to her in gentle tones. She whispered a word to the home teacher, who was standing just within the fold of the curtain, a silent but interested listener to what was going on—and immediately she disappeared behind the scenes. She returned leading Johnny Wade, bowed gracefully to her guest and placed Johnny's hand in hers.

The visitor spoke a few words to her stewards, who stepped to one side, allowing Johnny to stand at her right hand and Jimmy to stand at her left hand. Then those girls stepped close to the boys, one on each side of their teacher.

There the five of them stood, self-possessed, confident, looking out over the audience. The stillness became oppressive! It

seemed to me that no one of the five was peering into the eyes of anyone in that schoolroom; rather were all of them gazing into another and distant world.

Then she spoke to us. At once she became radiantly beautiful. A strange presence penetrated the room, diffusing itself softly over everything. She related the story of her wonderful school and its devoted disciples. She said she loved her girls and boys as she could have loved children of her own had she been blessed with them. They believed in knowing all they were able to learn about all creation, and when they made the acquaintance of things with which they came in daily contact, their hearts were filled with a great brotherly love. There was not one of them, she continued to say, who was not imbued with the spirit and the law of love for everything in the universe.

She told us there had never been a time in her life when she had not made it a pleasure, as well as a study, to be friendly with everything with which she came in contact each day. That it was her one great joy to be on terms of intimacy with the common things of earth. Whether it were the rain softly pelting April's first blooms and the young green grass; or the lullabies a spring wind crooned to her as she walked in the open fields; or the crunching of ice and snow under her feet as she sped along over winter's white mantle; or the weird call of the loon which she had so often heard in north-

ern waters, the song of an unseen bird as it flitted in hidden coverts; the chirp of a cricket beside a dusty roadway—to her everything was God's handiwork, and it mattered not how seemingly insignificant, she made herself known to it and loved it because it was intimately related to herself!

She said she endeavored to instill into her girls and boys the beauty and the worth of the common things in life. That each possessed a joy in living commensurate with its development, and was as loath, in its way, to surrender its capacity to enjoy living on the earth as either one of them might have been.

She explained her thought of creation, and that nothing had been created which was not in its place and functioning according to immutable laws. She could not understand how anything should disturb man in his dominion; neither did she know why he should be in continual warfare against the so-called wild things of the earth, thereby removing forever creatures which contributed so greatly to his betterment.

She referred to the day's celebration, characterizing it as the best Thanksgiving Day offering she had ever known. It had been her great pleasure, as well as that of her girl stewards, to listen to the program so well placed before them, and she expressed the wish that its lessons would be carried into all parts of the community for daily application from that time forth.

Her hands rested gently, lovingly upon the shoulders of Johnny and Jimmy as she told her audience of that unseen thread which bound her to them forever. She admitted that it was not her way to award praise for the doing of any duty. She averred that in time rewards would come to the faithful, to those who continued to do rather than to seek, and that wisdom was the ultimate findings of experience.

She nodded to the teacher to have the curtain drawn. She and her four disciples fell back into the group of bird-clad pupils behind them, took positions in the exact center of that close-huddled semicircle—and waited!

Thus stood the players and their guests for one short minute. Every eye on the stage was riveted upon her as the center of attraction. Then the curtain slowly shut from view this inspired director and her breathless wild-life guardians.

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